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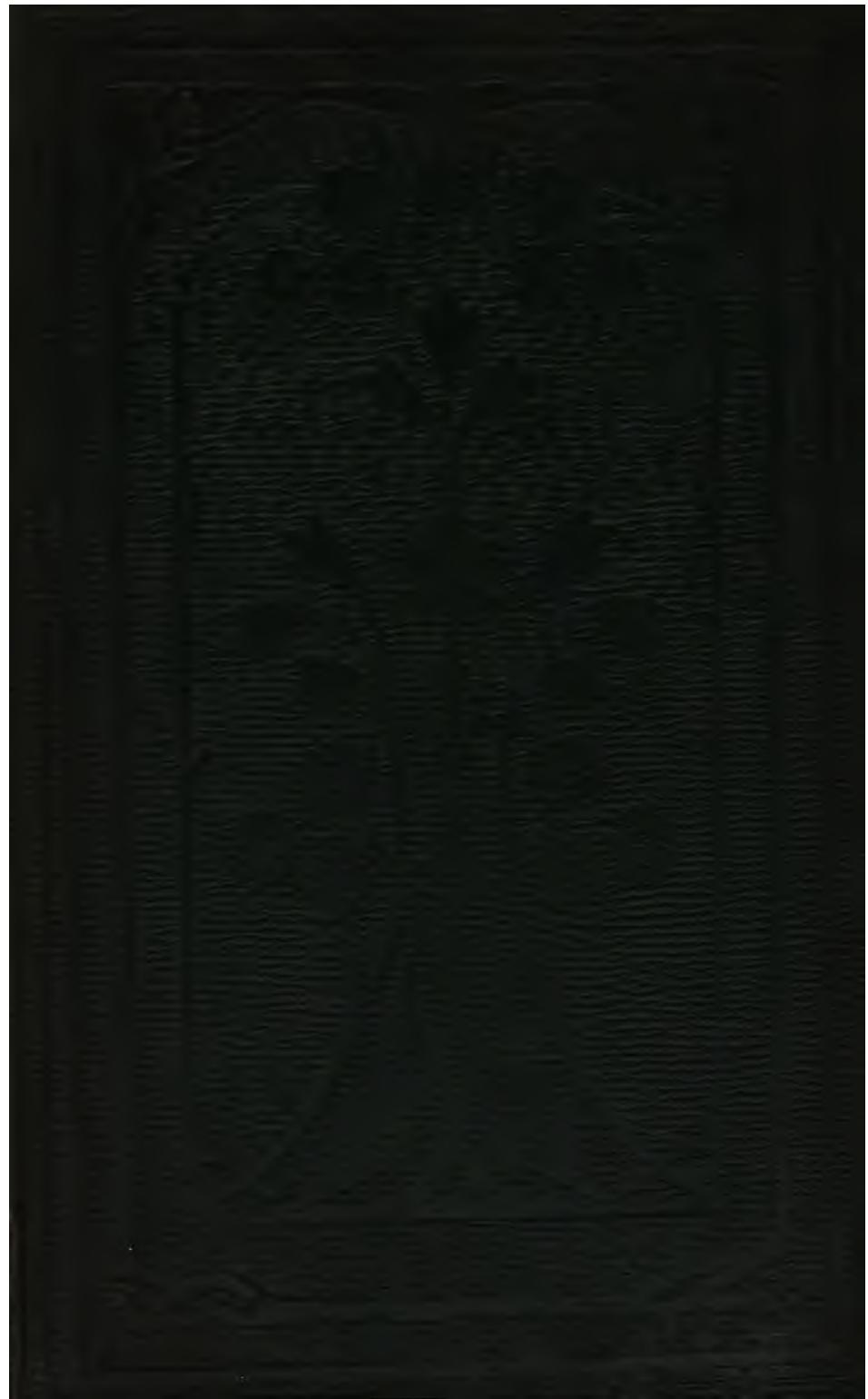
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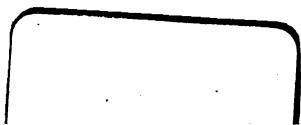
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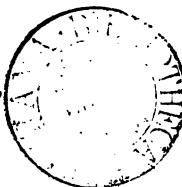


D A R K A N D F A I R.

BY

SIR CHARLES ROCKINGHAM.

AUTHOR OF
"ROCKINGHAM," "ELECTRA,"
&c. &c.



"I saw her and I sighed for her as the thirsty longeth for water."

EASTERN TALES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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D A R K A N D F A I R.

CHAPTER I.

“WE must first bring these wretched papers into something like order again,” said Lady Camilla. “They certainly have had an unconscionable shaking during the scuffle. I wonder,” continued she, while thus employed, “whether you think we know anything about it. Shall I give a guess at one or two of the figures before I look into them?”

“Pray do.”

“Well, here’s for the butcher’s bill first. You kill your own mutton, don’t you?”

"I do, during most of the year."

"So I should have thought. It's none so bad generally ; but," added she, with a particularly knowing glance, "it is as often under three years old as over it."

"Not often over it, I must confess."

"Ah ! ah ! that's the time of day ! They tried to pawn three for the four-year old upon me from the home farm at Dreadnought, once upon a time, but it wouldn't do. What a set to I and old Dodlesly, the steward, had about it, to be sure. Well, the mutton being killed at home, how much should the butcher's bill be in a house like this ?—that's the question. What say you, Miss Vinny ?"

"Indeed, I can hardly tell ; my little experience has been in so very different a line."

"Never mind ; give a guess, and I'll give another, and we will see who is nearest the mark."

"A guess ?" replied Vinny, diffidently—"three pounds a week."

"Three pounds, oh ! you goose. Never

mind : it is said now, and can't be unsaid. Will you give a guess, Walter ?"

" I say thirty."

" Thirty ! well you are a—never mind what."

" It's the pincipal item, you know, Cammy."

" Is it indeed, wiseacre ? It is a pity the others will always be coming so close upon it. Now that you have both exposed yourselves pretty well, it is my turn. Since the war, markets are pretty well up :—I say, with the mutton killed at home, from seven to eight pounds a week."

" Perhaps it ought to be, Lady Camilla, but it is generally more."

" Well," said she, seriously, " it shouldn't be more. It's very liberal and that sort of thing ; but still it is nothing like so large an establishment as Dreadnought ; and, whenever I'm in charge there, I always manage to keep it under ten, if we are alone. To be sure, the farm and the park may send up more there

than here, and that should be looked into before we form too decided an opinion. I say, Vinny, haven't you got all those papers and orders square yet?"

"Yes, I think I have."

"It is time you should. So have I. Now let's each of us show Calcraft how we can cast up."

And cast up they did, both of them, with extraordinary rapidity and precision. The result of their labour was, that Lavinia discovered an error of sixpence and Lady Camilla one of ten shillings.

"It is not much, to be sure," exclaimed the latter; "but still it is gratifying to a degree; nothing keeps stewards and housekeepers in such good order as to persuade them that their accounts are carefully looked into. As you truly said, though the casting-up is a small part of the business, it is the prices charged, and, above all, the quantities consumed, or rather sent in, that require the overhauling. Here's for it; but, first, how

many people have you in the house altogether?"

"I am ashamed to say, Lady Camilla, I cannot exactly remember. I know there are now fourteen in the hall."

"Well, that will do for me; and one, two, three, four, five in the house-keeper's room that's nineteen; and one, two, three, four, and Lady E. five—nineteen and five, twenty-four. Now a pound-and-a-half a head per day, would be twenty-four, and twelve, thirty-six; say forty a day for the whole house. Forty times seven, are two-hundred and eighty, say three-hundred a week—you never can keep it down to quite that, you know; but that's a sort of a guide. Now let's see what the butcher says for himself. In round numbers seventy and eighty are a hundred-and-fifty; and ninety are two-hundred and forty; and ninety-five are three-hundred and thirty-five. There are three-hundred and thirty-five without the mutton. It is too much, you know—out and out too much, and a great deal more

than there is any show for, besides, though it is all very plentiful and liberal here, as no one can deny. You don't mind my speaking up, as the lawyers say?"

"On the contrary, Lady Camilla. You are conferring a most essential service upon me."

"I wish I was; we owe you something for the disturbance we have made this morning. There is no doubt, though, that even where one doesn't wish to save and hoard, there are more satisfactory ways of getting through one's income, than being plundered and pillaged out of it. Now, Vinny, you look over the grocer with me, and then we'll attack the coals, the wood and the wine."

The two fair cousins set to work accordingly; and though Lady Camilla still kept the lead, I could not but admire the shrewd and judicious remarks which both of them made, nor cease to wonder how such graceful little heads could contain so much aptitude for the most irksome and tedious of all pursuits. The upshot of the conference was that, upon almost every book,

my expenditure was pronounced to be too heavy by far, and an economy of three or four hundreds a year pointed out as perfectly feasible.

I readily promised to make the best of the very excellent suggestions which I had received.

"Ah ! but it's not once in a way, mind you," said Lady Camilla, "that these things must be looked into. We have only shown you one side of the question ; of course they'll be putting forth the other ; but if they puzzle you, come to us, that's all."

"And will you really be kind enough to give me again your counsel and assistance ? "

"Most certainly ; won't we, Vinny ? "

"Then my Saturdays, which were my dullest and most dreaded days, will become my happiest and most cheerful of all."

"Dear me ! we are very polite this morning, are we not, Vinny ? "

"Yes indeed ;—quite Sir Charles Grandison."

"I think we could not have a better op-

portunity," resumed Lady Cammy, "for asking that little favour."

"What favour, Cammy?"

"About the garden, you know."

"Oh! to be sure."

"He won't refuse you, Vinny; do you ask him."

Indeed I won't," said Miss Dieaway, with a slight blush.

"Then I must, I suppose," said Lady Camilla. "I don't know how it is that whenever there is anything particularly audacious to be done, it's poor Cammy that must do it, notwithstanding the natural diffidence of her sex. And the best of it is that, when the thing is done, and got hold of, everyone steps in for his share, and Cammy's is sometimes the smallest of all. However, that is the way of the world. Now, for the case in point. You know pretty well, Mr. Calcraft, how we are circumstanced here."

"In what respect, Lady Camilla?"

"I mean as to our stay with you. We may

be all going away to-morrow, or we may have to remain on a year, mayn't we Walter? I say, Walter, Walter, are you asleep?"

"What's the wow," exclaimed his lordship, thus unceremoniously aroused from the gentlest of slumbers: "are the pwemises on fiwe?"

"No, not that we know of. But do you consider it particularly civil to be falling asleep before us all at this time of day?"

"I wasn't asleep, Cammy, I was only we-flecting. This hot weather makes one feel so wemarkably weflective."

"Dear me! I am quite sorry to have disturbed your meditations. What was it I was saying? Oh! ah! I have it now. I was reminding Mr. Calcraft that we may have to leave him one day, or that we may be compelled to stay on with him for a year or so."

"Or two or thwee," interposed Lord Walter, extending his limbs to their fullest stretch.

"The longer the better for me," observed I.

"Oh! you are come to think that at last," said Lady Camilla. "I was always sure that

the more you knew of us, the more you would appreciate us. Now, if we are to spend the summer with you, or a good part of it, there is one thing which Vinny and I would like beyond measure—it would be to have a little bit of your garden to ourselves."

"Is that," exclaimed I, "this extraordinary great favour which you were to ask?"

"Nothing more nor less. Is it granted?"

"Most readily, Lady Camilla, I would almost say most gratefully, so happy am I to contribute to your amusement, in any way, whilst you are here."

"But we are to do exactly what we like with it, you know, and to put in any kind or sort of flower that we fancy."

"Unquestionably."

"That's all right. You will say a word to the gardener, won't you?"

"I shall not fail to place him and all his staff under your immediate orders."

"That's a dear, good man. Because, you see—you won't mind my hazarding a critical observation, will you?"

"Not in the least."

"Your garden is very well, in a way. There are plenty of vegetables, fruit, and so forth, and a good many flowers too, but not at all the profusion of these there might be, nor the right kind neither. You have a few geraniums, but they are of the most ancient and exploded description—not a 'Lucile,' not a 'Superb,' not a 'Beauty of the Day!' As for the roses, to judge from the labels, they are equally obsolete. The quantities also are by no means what they ought to be. I wonder that you are not fonder of flowers—you who live so much in the country."

"I am, Lady Camilla, very fond of them; and yet I am sure that, as usual, your observations are perfectly well founded. The fact is that, whether from ignorance, or the force of habit, I seldom make any observation about what is going on here, and we become easily and far outstripped by our neighbours. Besides, where there is no lady of the house, the flower-garden seldom thrives."

“And she must know something about it, too, I promise you, to keep pace at all with the modern improvements. However, if you are kind enough to let Vinny and me try our hands at it, you will see a little change yet, though it is rather late in the year to set about it.”

“Ah, that is just what I am afraid of.”

“Yes,” said Lady Camilla; “the spring flowers and the roses cannot be interfered with now, but we can get up oceans of mignonette, sweet-pea, stock, China-asters, and other annuals unnumbered. As to the geraniums and verbenas, I have a few snug little millions of cuttings of my own particular private property, at Dreadnought, which I can get over here, if you will give me ground-room for them, and they will put you gloriously into stock afterwards.”

“I shall be only too proud to receive them; but how can they be safely brought over?”

“A cart would do it easily, but it would be an awful time on the road, to be sure, and

when I am full of a thing, I hate being delayed. After all, why shouldn't the drag go for them—eh, Walter?"

"What for, Cammy? My thoughts have been swaying a little fwom the convewsation."

"For my geraniums, at Dreadnought."

"For your gewaniums, at Dweadnought!" exclaimed his lordship, now fully aroused. "Who ever heard of a dwag cawwyng gewaniums?"

"I don't say that it is a common practice. Still, if your drag, has nothing to do—and it hasn't, most days of the week—I don't see why it shouldn't just run over, and fetch us these plants smartly."

"But the dwag was never built to cawwy gewaniums."

"Who pretends that it was? but that's no reason that it shouldn't. I never saw such a man, when his old rubbishing drag is concerned. Just lend it to me for a couple of days, and don't inquire anything more."

"I must beg leave to wemark," replied her

cousin, "in the first place, 'that the dwag is neither an old nor a wubbishing one ; for it was built, about thwee years ago, by Wichard Barker, and it is univewssally weckoned one of the neatest in Gweat Bwitain ;—and, in the second place, that if it is seen dwiving through a countwy town full of gewaniums, it is enough to give wise to an insuwwection."

" Well, but if I take all the risk upon myself, and pay for the repairs, in case of an accident —"

" What egwegious nonsense ! As if I ever wanted anybody to wun the wisk, or to pay for the wepairs where my cawwiage or pwoperty is concerned. It stands to weason that if you want the dwag, you are heartily welcome to it. All I meant was to expwess my pwivate opinion upon twansporting gewaniums on a dwag. And now I have entewed my silent pwotest, I will say no more. I should like to know, however, who is to dwive ; not the gewaniums, I suppose ?"

" Not exactly ; but I presume Richard can."

“Wichard! do you think I would twust
Wichard with my four-in-hand as far as Cal-
cwaft’s gate even.”

“Whoever talked of a four-in-hand?”

“When you mentioned the dwag, I thought
you meant the four nags too. The dwag with-
out four nags to it would be no dwag at all.”

“I shall want the four nags, of course.”

“I was pwetty sure you would.”

“I shall want the four of course,” resumed
Lady Camilla; “but they are not to be har-
nessed together. Richard is able to drive a
pair, I should hope, and the other pair can go
on.”

“Inside, I suppose,” resumed his lordship,
humorously.

“My gracious! how bright and ready we
are this morning,” retorted Lady Camilla;
“the effects of the fine weather, no doubt.
But I mean simply this, and it is perfectly
feasible: Mr. Calcraft, who is always kind,
good-natured and never makes difficulties, will
lend us a steady man to take on one pair to

the Cock and Sparrow, at Oldbridge ; Richard can drive there with the other pair, leave them there, under charge of the aforesaid man, proceed with the fresh pair to Dreadnought, and change on his return to Oldbridge. There is nothing so very complicated in all that."

" No more there is, excepting the dwag being turned into a cawwier's cart to convey gewaniums in. However, that's your contwiance and not mine, and so, if anything goes wong, you must wemember that I entewed my silent pwotest against it in the stwongest terms."

" Ah ! ah ! ah ! very good indeed," said Lady Cammy ; " we wont forget that nor the wording of it. And so, Mr. Calcraft, we may, within four days, expect these cuttings well packed, so as not to scratch, and then we will show you what sort of a thing a flower-garden should be in a place like this. We shall require some tools though—I mean light and handy ones, for our own use—and a good wide straw-hat apiece, and some gardening gloves.

I suppose that they can be got in the neighbourhood?"

"Perhaps, you will allow me to inquire, Lady Camilla."

"We will; and if ——"

But our conversation was here interrupted by a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of the expected steward and man of business. My visitors, thereupon, retired forthwith, leaving me in close conference with their far less welcome successors.

When we met again, at luncheon, there was something no doubt rather unusual in my appearance; for the three young cousins, after having stealthily glanced at me, more than once, gave utterance to their kindred opinion upon the matter, each in his or her peculiar style. Lady Camilla, of course, took the lead.

"Poor Mr. Calcraft looks," said she, "as if he had gone through some hard work since we parted."

"He's as wed as a turkey-cock," observed his lordship.

"I am afraid that he has been vexed and annoyed," said Lavinia, feelingly. "We must let him eat his luncheon in peace, for once in a way."

"I should think so," responded Lady Cammy; "and he is going to drink a glass of wine with me to drown his cares. Wouldn't you like to know what it's all about, Vinny?"

"Not particularly, except I could be of some use or comfort."

"That we could be, of course," resumed Lady Cammy. "I'll bet fifty to five, in shillings, that he has had a brush about the reforms in the household—just a preliminary set to, that's all."

"You are not far wrong there, indeed, Lady Camilla."

"I know I am not. But with whom has the principal tug of war been? that's the question. No servants here?" added she, looking round. "That's all right: now let us see who will come nearest the mark. I don't know much about the steward and the man of

business ; but, from the very slight glance I had of them, I should say that they are amazingly sly, deferential sort of gentlemen, likely to say, when the savings were suggested : ‘ Well indeed, Sir Charles, if it is your pleasure to reduce the establishment, Sir Charles, it is not unlikely that we might find some means of meeting your wishes, Sir Charles.’ Ah ! there is a leer in your eye, Mr. Calcraft, which warns me that I am not so far out. Am I now ? ”

I could not indeed suppress a passing smile at the extraordinary quickness with which the ready witted speaker had seized upon the peculiarities of voice, manner and bearing that distinguished the two personages to whom she was alluding. Encouraged by the silent assent into which I had thus been betrayed, she proceeded with increased volubility :

“ Old Redhill was summoned first, I suppose, the next man in the house to Sir Charles, as he is in the habit of saying. He is troubled

with low spirits is Mr. Redhill. Have you ever discovered that, Mr. Calcraft?"

"I have indeed."

"It appears," interposed Lord Walter, "that he never shaves of a morning without pwopounding to himself the quewy whether it wouldn't be cheewier to cut his thwoat at once. He's a bwick, though, that old Wedhill, I must say, and vewy atttentive,"

"He is all that," resumed Lady Camilla, "and, upon the whole, quite a creditable and safe man to have here. I have no doubt that, when the reductions were mentioned, he looked monstrously blae, meditated suicide again, and so forth. But, upon reflection, I suspect that he was more sorry than hurt at heart by the notion that Sir Charles's money was mis-spent or overspent, and that he is even now hard at work to see what can really be done in the re-trenchment line. The leer again, I do declare. I am pretty rightish once more, Mr. Calcraft, am not I?"

"Most marvellously so, Lady Camilla."

" Next came Mrs. Roberts, the housekeeper ; not a bad woman, upon the whole ; but she is a guy, she is ! Beats Lady E. clean out of the field. You have heard of her nerves perhaps, and of her misfortunes, and of her accidents occasionally, eh ?"

" Occasionally, indeed, Lady Camilla."

" I have laughed sometimes in my life, to be sure, but never more, I think, than the other night when Vinny and I set that darling Billy to bark at her."

" Indeed, Cammy, I had nothing at all to do with it."

" Oh, no ! nothing at all ; but to laugh the whole time, and egg me on in every conceivable way."

" Pray tell me what occurred," said I.

" What occurred ? Nothing very particular ; only it was in the dark passage leading to the housekeeper's room, and seeing her shuffling on before us, we couldn't resist showing her to Billy, just pointing her out, you know ; upon which he flew at her, barking

like mad. Down she came, crying, and screeching, and vowing she had been bitten in fifty places. We got her on her legs again, amid screams of laughter, but nothing would serve her, but to be thoroughly convinced that the dog must be mad, and that she must become so. Well, the noise and row brought down Parsons, my maid, who is first-rate at any sort of fun, and who began at once upon sundry cases of hydrophobia which she had seen, and which all would have been prevented, if a good stiff glass of salt and water had been drank off at once. This was accordingly prepared, and swallowed by the unfortunate woman, to the inexpressible amusement and delight of all present. I wonder that you didn't hear of it, Mr. Calcraft; you were deprived of her valuable services for two days, in consequence."

"I was aware of the latter fact, but had thought she was suffering from the bite of a bee."

"So there was a bee, but that was some

days afterwards. The unfortunate woman thought that, for once during the spring, she would go and see the tulip beds, and, safe enough, down comes a bee upon her, and stings her here, right at the end of the nose. There certainly must be luck or something of the kind in these sort of matters, for there has hardly been a fine day since we have been here, that Vinny, and I, and the garden boys, and our maids, and Walter, and I don't know who else, have not crossed and re-crossed that self-same spot, and never did the bees come near us. Well, to proceed, when the reductions were mentioned to Mrs. Roberts, there must have been a glorious crying match, wasn't there, now?"

"That there certainly was, Lady Camilla."

"Ah! do you see that. But it don't matter, you know. When she has cried her eyes out, she will set to work in her own peculiar way, and try to meet your wishes. One cannot say that she is a good servant, poor lady, but like most of them here, she is not a very

bad one neither, for a quiet house like this. To my mind, you have only one very good servant, and one bad one."

"Which are they, may I ask, Lady Camilla?"

"You would like to know very much, wouldn't you, Mr. Calcraft? But I am not going to be so rude and unmannerly, I promise you, as to mention names, in a case like this, before the master of the house."

"You would injure no one, Lady Camilla, at all events, by naming the very good one."

"No more I should, to be sure; but you know her as well as I do."

"Do you mean my ally, Susan?"

"Of course, I do; Sukey, we call her. That is a treasure of a girl, and a credit to any house—never did I see such a lively bird."

"She says as much of you, Lady Camilla, in more deferential terms."

"I dare say she does, for we are intense friends, besides agreeing pretty well upon Vinny's beauty."

"Now, Cammy, for mercy's sake, don't begin all that nonsense again!" cried Miss Dieaway, languidly.

"The twuest and most wational thing that Cammy has said since the servants wetired," observed Lord Walter, emphatically.

"Well, never mind whether it be true or false, reasonable or unreasonable," resumed Miss Vinny. "Do let us return to the former subject."

"With all my heart," replied Cammy. "We were talking about poor Mr. Calcraft's tribulations, in consequence of the suggested reforms, and although I have already shadowed forth some of them, we have not yet come to what Walter would call the 'cwowning cwsis,' have we, Sir Charles?"

"We have not indeed."

"She is an awkward customer that, isn't she?"

"Who, Lady Camilla?"

"Who? I like that, as if you didn't know as well as I do. Mrs. P.E.A.C.H. I hope

that we shall not be overheard, that's all, taking these liberties with her name. The mill I had with her about little Billy's dinner would be nothing to what we might expect now. She gave warning, I suppose Mr. Calcraft?"

"She did."

"Well, and what did you say?"

"What do you think, Lady Camilla?"

"You began to cry, no doubt, and begged her pardon, and said it was all a mistake, and that you would never do it again."

"Not exactly. I showed, I hope, a very bold front, but at heart I was faint enough."

"Ah! ah! ah! I like to hear you own it, at all rates," resumed my light-hearted interrogator. "We are mortally afraid of her, I believe. Why don't you stand up to her like a true-born Briton?"

"Because I cannot but feel, Lady Camilla, that I am terribly in her power, just at present."

"How so?"

"How so? Surely it is quite bad enough to give you such a sorry welcome and such poor entertainment. What would it be if you were to have no dinner at all?"

"We shouldn't like that much, to be sure; but that is by no means the necessary alternative."

"I am very much afraid that it would be—for a few days, at least."

"Is that all you know about it, Mr. Calcraft? These men are strange hands, to be sure, at managing a house. Have you never discovered yet that it is your kitchen-maid—and she is not a bad one, by the way—who always dresses the luncheon, and often most part of the dinner?"

"Is it so, indeed?"

"It is so, indeed, Mr. Calcraft. Consequently, if circumstances were unfortunately to oblige you to part with the said Mrs. P. E. A. C. H.,—we won't mention names, you know,—your guests and yourself would fare none the worse, even until she were

replaced, which would be no very difficult matter. You look as if I had given you a notion."

" You have, indeed, Lady Camilla."

" And so pray don't let the said good lady ride quite too high a horse over you, on our account, that's all I ask."

" Well, I won't, Lady Camilla ; but still —"

" Ah, ah ! You are not quite up to it yet, eh ? I should give something to see the explanations come off, to be sure."

" So you shall, if it affords you any amusement, Lady Camilla. They may be soon expected now."

" Indeed ?"

" Yes. What occurred before lucheon was merely preliminary. We are to meet again, and come to some conclusion, at three o'clock."

" Where ?"

" In my study. And there is no doubt that, if you would condescend to be present, Lady Camilla, I might derive very valuable

countenance or guidance from a passing look of yours."

Lady Cammy seemed a little staggered at this prompt compliance of mine with the wish that she had unguardedly expressed, and she showed some disposition to retreat. But it was my turn to cast a veil over the statue of Discretion, and I insisted:

"No, no, Lady Camilla; the suggestion originated with you, and I am far too eager to act with you, for once, in the capacity of an ally, to release you now. You can be quietly looking over some prints in a corner."

"Oh! I dare say, and forfeiting my good name, by being found boxed up with you in your own sanctum. No, no, Mr. Calcraft, that would never do."

"We need not be alone together, Lady Camilla; Miss Vinny and Lord Walter can be of the party, if they please."

"A household wow isn't much in my line, except I am wequiwed," observed his lord-

ship. "But Cammy and Vinny may as well go, if it affords them any wecweation."

"All right, then," said Lady Camilla. "It is five minutes to three now, and you had better come along with us, Mr. Calcraft, and give us out the print-books. We will be as quiet as two mice in our corner, but we will sit so as to be able to exchange impressions with you by look, unknown to Mrs.—hem! Now, come along with you; I do love anything of a stir."

Mrs. Peach was very exact; I owe this tribute to her memory. As the clock struck three, I heard a full, firm, determined rap at the door, and, when she entered, she found me at my desk, with my two fair companions in the background, wholly absorbed, to all appearance, in their assumed occupation. She seemed a little surprised, but by no means daunted, by their presence. Indeed, so pugnacious was her expression, that Lady Camilla could not resist bestowing upon me one of her peculiar winks—an accomplishment which,

as I already knew, she had learned from Lord Dauntless, after a month's assiduous tuition.

"Well, Mrs. Peach," began I, "have you been thinking over the subject of our little conversation before luncheon."

"Yes, Sir Charles."

"And what conclusion have you come to?"

"My conclusion, Sir Charles, is, that I 'ave always done my best in this 'ouse, both as to heconomy and as to hindustry; and that I can't and won't promise any more on either 'ead."

"Then what is to be done, Mrs. Peach, if I positively require that the expenses of the establishment should be curtailed, as they may be, I make no doubt, without infringing upon the comforts of any one? What is to be done then, I say?"

"We must part, I suppose, Sir Charles—we must part," said Mrs. Peach, doggedly.

A succession of nods from Lady Camilla here warned me that, in her opinion, I should close at once with the proposal; but I felt inclined still to be less precipitate.

" You know, Mrs. Peach, that that is an alternative which I never like to contemplate."

" Then, if you want me to stay, Sir Charles, which is your wish, mind you, more than mine, I must make so bold as to say that the less I'm haggard the better. I 'ave a great deal to go through in this 'ouse, which I don't talk about; and, if I am to be baited and badgered, besides, by stewards and men of business, the place will be too 'ot for me, and you will bring on the 'termination of blood to my 'ead."

A gesture from Lady Camilla's thumb, which pointed first at Mrs. Peach, and then at the door, here again put me into possession of her ladyship's view of the case.

" So you don't think, Mrs. Peach," resumed I, " that you could do anything to meet my views in this matter?"

" Nothing, Sir Charles, whatsonever."

Lady Camilla's gesture was here repeated several times, backed by a corresponding number of winks. The crisis was at hand.

"Then, I fear, Mrs. Peach, that we must part."

"Very well, Sir Charles, very well; and I 'ope you will get as good a servant, and as good a cook. I suppose they have grow'd wondrous plentiful, all of a sudden."

I could see that astonishment and indignation were contending for the mastery in Mrs. Peach's expressive countenance; but as she had a long arrear of disrespect, and, perhaps, of dishonesty to atone for, I could not resist inflicting a slight additional penalty.

"I feel very confident that I shall find no difficulty in speedily and efficiently replacing you; and, as I do not approve of keeping on discharged servants, I have to require that you will leave the house as soon as convenient to yourself."

Lady Camilla's repeated nods of approval were now seconded by Lavinia's; but the conference was at end; for, after gasping several inarticulate exclamations of astonishment and

fury, my gentle antagonist suddenly flounced out of the room.

"A capital riddance, a capital riddance," cried both the fair cousins together, rising up and clasping their hands.

"She certainly is no loss, in a social point of view," observed I.

"No; nor in any other," continued Lady Camilla. "You will carry on the reductions all the better for having made a victim, and, as a cook, now that she is gone, perhaps we may say she was a very bad one. Not a notion of what a soup, an *entrée*, or an *entremêt* ought to be—not the most distant. My gracious! upon the same wages, and much less expenditure, what a cook, and what a table you might have."

"Ah! Lady Camilla! but how is the former ideal being to be enticed here?"

"That is an immense difficulty, isn't it? Cooks require places as much as people require cooks, I should hope. Just let me write to Dreadnought about it, and, before the end of

the week, you shall have your choice of half a dozen."

"I shall be too grateful, Lady Camilla; but do you think that this quiet place would suit them?"

"Of course it will, and if you will allow Vinny and me to give her a start for the first week, we will show you the sort of dinner you ought to have in such a house as yours."

I need not add, that this offer was accepted quite as readily as the previous one, and the consequence certainly was such an improvement in the *cuisine* of the old hall, and such a reduction in its expenditure, as its ingenuous master could hardly have conceived to be possible.

CHAPTER II.

ON the morning of the second day which followed that of Mrs. Peach's dismissal, when my two fair visitors appeared at breakfast together, an evil habit, by the way, which they had contracted and adhered to from the first, their eyes rested upon an unwonted sight. By the only couch of which the small room can boast were to be seen two rakes, two spades, two hoes and two garden-knives, all of the slightest dimensions, and two complete gardening suits, adapted to the age and appearance of the parties for whom they were destined.

"Oh ! Cammy, Cammy, do look here," was her enraptured cousin's first exclamation.
"Did you ever see anything so lovely and en-

chanting as these white straw hats lined with blue?"

"They are nobbish indeed, Vinny—and those long gloves with blue ribbons to them; and what on earth are these?"

"Aprons, dearest, brown-holland aprons, trimmed with blue; but what are these?"

"Jackets, I vow, the dearest, darlingest little jackets to match. A sort of over-alls to preserve the smart dresses. Well, did you ever?—no I never. Slip one on, Vinny, there's a duck. That's all right. You don't look very ugly so, to be sure. Now let me try on the other—that's the time of day. Want a couple of garden-girls, Sir Charles?" continued Lady Cammy, approaching me with one hand raised to the brim of her straw hat, and the other clasping that of her associate. "Good, honest, hard-working girls, Sir Charles, won't leave a weed behind them, nor touch a strawberry until they are quite ripe."

"And what wages do you expect?"

"Whatever you please, Sir Charles; a trifle

in money will do, with our keep. But I say, Mr. Calcraft, are these really for us?"

"Unquestionably."

"Well, you certainly are—isn't he Vinny? and just in time for the plants from Dreadnought. Give us a week, and we will show you what sort of a garden you should have in a place like this. Don't let's take them off, Vinny: we shan't be a bit too hot in them, with that window open, and we are already behind hand with Mr. Calcraft's tea."

It chanced that Lord Walter was, on that day, earlier with us than was his wont, so that ere we had fully disposed of all the expected flowers in our imaginative improvements, we were greeted by his exclamation, on the very threshold of the door:

"My gwacious, Calcwaft! is this a masquewade?"

"An appropriate one, at all events, as I trust you will think."

"Vewy appwopwiate, indeed, and vewy attractive, too. Let me look at you both; it

is impossible to say which is pwettiest so. You look fwesher than any woses that ever were gwown or ever will be. If you were both to make your entwée so into a London fancy ball, why the owchestwa would strike up of it's own accord."

" You had better strike up at your breakfast, and not be making compliments to Mr. Calcraft's garden-girls."

" I wonder if they will be able to bwing forward the chewwies and the stwawbewwies, Calcwaft?" continued his lordship, extending his cup to Miss Vinny, who always officiated as tea-maker. " I shall gwow gwey if I'm depwived much longer of chewwy-tarts and stwawbewwies and cweam."

" Ah! I would talk a great deal about them, if I were you," cried Lady Camilla. " I have a great, good mind to tell Mr. Calcraft what you were saying about them yesterday."

" What was that?"

" When the gardener had shown you the

cherry-trees, and you enquired which were the strawberry-trees."

"Not in earnest, Lady Camilla, was it?"

"You had better ask him, Mr. Calcraft."

"I don't mind telling the twuth," replied his lordship, with his invariable self-possession.

"I have never been in the countwy duwing the spwing before—at least, within my we-membwance, and I am quite fwee to confess that my notions with wespect to the gwowth of garden pwoduce in genewal are wather contwacted. After all, there is no weason why stwawbewwies shouldn't gwow like chewwies, upon twees, and not upon little woots."

"Except that they don't," observed Lady Camilla; "but that's nothing to the grafts."

"And to the grass," added Miss Vinny.

"What about the grafts and the grass?" enquired I.

"He had better tell you himself."

"So I will, Cammy, Evey man has best wight to welate his own stowy. You see," continued his lordship, complacently attacking

his third egg, "these fascinating cweatures here, wemarking that I am tolewably ignowant in these matters, have been twying to impose on my cwedulity in a vawietty of ways. And so they did at first until they cawwied the joke wather too far. I am willing to agwee to a gweat deal for a quiet life, but when I am told that the gwass only gwows in the summer months, it makes me vewy westive."

"Did they really attempt to persuade you that, Lord Walter?" said I.

"Yes; but it wouldn't do."

"And the grafts, Walter?" cried Vinny, in the highest glee.

"Well, the gwafts, that was another cwammer, saving the pwesence of all pwesent. As if sticking a stwange bwanch into a twee could make a new descwiptiion of twee of it altogether. Ah! ah! ah!"

"Is he not rich, Mr. Calcraft?"

"Ain't I wich? I like that, Cammy. It's wather you who are somewhat too opulent. I suppose if we were to stick an apple bwanch

into your arm, you would become an apple twee. I don't think she will twy the expewiment, eh Calcwaft?"

"If she does it should be with a rose bud, as the stock and the graft should be the nearest of kin."

"I suppose if I blush, which I always do when I am talked of, I shall best acknowledge the compliment, Sir Charles?"

"And best justify it too, Lady Camilla."

"Well, twy away," resumed Lord Walter, "so that you don't make any expewiments upon me, nor upon Vinny, nor upon the dwag when it comes back, nor upon the chewwies and stwawbewwies. I should be sowwy if anything were to happen to the chewwies and stwawbewwies. Some of them are alweady quite wed. I say, Calcwaft, you'll let us have them at bweakfast when they are in?"

"As many as you can possibly consume."

"That's all wight."

"Yes, it is all right," interposed Lady Cammy, "but you shan't have more than

your fair share, Master Walter, I can tell you. First come, first served is a wholesome rule ; and Vinny and I will see that it is applied in our case."

"I don't much care about your wule, old fellow. Wedhill and I are good fwiends, and he won't overlook my intewests. Is there any news, Calcwaft?" proceeded his lordship, observing that I had taken up the paper.

"Nothing of any consequence, I think."

"No telegraphs from the seat of war?"

"Not one, Lady Camilla."

"That isn't many," proceeded her ladyship. "How jolly this war is, to be sure ! It's new life to me."

"The war, Lady Camilla ?"

"Yes—the war, Mr. Calcraft. I suppose you are shocked. I know you are shocked and so is Vinny."

"I am, at all events" replied her fair cousin. "I hate to hear you talk so. To think that any day we may open the papers and see that hundreds and thousands of families are cast into mourning and desolation!"

"I am sorry for the families of course, but that cannot be helped. There always have been wars and there always will be. What are men made for but to face each other like men, and to fight it out when there is a fair quarrel."

"And you think the present cause a sufficient one for all this bloodshed and misery, dear Cammy?"

"I don't inquire into the causes and so forth as much as you do, Vinny. All those debates and papers and protocols set me fast asleep. I look to the broad facts. Well, the broad facts are that the Governments get into difficulties and go to war—the people are clamorous and overjoyed——"

"Are you quite sure of that, Lady Camilla?"

"I am, Mr. Calcraft, as far as England is concerned; and I go with old England heart and soul, hand and glove. My only wonder is that we kept up that pottering old peace so long; it was enough to ruin us all. If they

would but let me go off to the war, I shouldn't be long on the road."

" You would make a good soldier, I am sure, Lady Camilla."

" No one can say till he has been tried," replied she, " yet, somehow or another, I don't think I should run away when the others were scrambling forward. That has never been much in the line of the old Darealls, thank God. But as I can't go out there, all that's for it, is to hark on the others, and enjoy the fun, which I do, most intensely."

" That's all wight for you," said her cousin, " and I wish I could agwee to it ; but I can't see that the war makes any gweat diffewence after all."

" Oh ! dear Walter, what can you mean ?" exclaimed Lavinia.

" I mean any diffewence to me and to us all here. Of course, to those who are killed, and blown up, and destwoyed in a vawiety of fashions, it's not quite the same thing as if they were enjoying the wecweation of hunting and

my twareuse, if my natuwal limbs were weduced by one-half, and my nose were wemoved altogether?"

"Don't answer him, Vinny," cried her cousin. "There's no fear of his putting himself much out of his way in the present struggle, or any other. When these gallant officers come back, and they won't all be maimed and disfigured, we shall see who will carry away the ladies' hearts."

"They won't cawwy them all away, will they, Vinny, eh?" replied his lordship, adjusting his shirt collar with the serenest complacency.

"How can I tell?" was the blushing reply; but it was merged in Lady Camilla's still readier exclamation—

"Was anything so preposterous ever heard! But you are quite as bad, Mr. Calcraft, sitting there, staring at us all, and not putting in a word of your own. I should like to know what you think of us at heart, and of what we have been saying. Nothing very favourable, I make no doubt."

“More than you suppose, Lady Camilla.
“I agree, to a certain extent, with each of
you.”

“No easy matter, considering we all differ.”

“The coincidence of our views is certainly limited, as I have already said. Still, I concur with you, Lady Camilla, in thinking that the periodical return of these awful contests is an inevitable and predestined evil. I believe, with Lord Walter, that the great majority are perfectly indifferent to sufferings which are not brought home to them. Above all, however, I agree with Lavinia in regarding war itself as the disgrace still more than the scourge of the human race, and in wondering that so fearful a crime, and so egregious a folly should remain of such frequent recurrence.”

“Ah! but if we set out by saying that we should never go to war, I should like to know how long we should continue without being swallowed up by our neighbours.”

“Every state has, unquestionably, a right

to defend not only its territory, but also its interests and its honour. These, however, to justify a war, in my opinion, must be assailed and threatened in earnest, and in fact. And how few of the wars which have desolated the world could be honestly proved, before history, to have been undertaken and waged by the belligerents for such motives as these."

"That shows, Mr. Calcraft, I am not so wrong in saying that the origin and causes, and all that sort of thing, have very little to do with the matter; that we fight because we feel inclined to; because, in short, it is a law of our nature. Otherwise, why should I enjoy the war so intensely: it don't do me any good?"

"Because, Lady Camilla, our natural inclination does not always point to what is lawful, upright, or even expedient. No crime—no error—no folly—that was ever committed, has lacked that excuse, that it gratified the passion or fancy of the hour. Nations, like individuals, should be guided by higher motives; and

such must be shown for this, and for every contest, if it is to be carried on, for mere purposes of excitement, beyond its legitimate ends."

"Oh! as to that, I know of no legitimate ends, but the annihilation of Russia," resumed the ardent Lady Cammy; "and we'll do it. But why did they not give the command at once to old Dreadnought? He would have been at Moscow by this time, or wouldn't have a single man left."

"What's all this wow about the wight man and the wight place?" here interrupted his lordship. "And who put the wong man in the wong place? I can't make out what the cwy is about."

"They who raised it couldn't tell you; you may be sure of that," replied Lady Camilla. "As if every government did not, for its own sake, employ the people best fitted to insure success. They may be wrong sometimes; but they are as likely to know as others, I should hope."

"But isn't there a sort of wun now against the awistocwacy?" continued his lordship, examining the contents of his cigar-case with the utmost unconcern.

"So they say; but I am not alarmed. They that are nothing want to be on a par with those that are something. They have tried that from the beginning of the world; and they have never managed it yet."

"But, if evewything is to be got by mewit, what will become of the awistocwacy, eh, Cammy?"

"The aristocracy must have merit, of course; and so they have; and so they always have had; and so they always will have. Look at Dauntless: he would face any man that I know, though he is a peer's son. If not, he must give way, that's all, I see for it; but I don't fancy he will."

"So you don't think, Cammy, that we shall be all weduced to the wank of the peasantwy before the year is out?"

"No; nor before the age is out. Do you, Mr. Calcraft?"

"So long as the aristocracy produces such spirits as yours, Lady Camilla, I have no doubt that its privileges, or, to speak more correctly, its position, will be fully maintained and vindicated."

"Well, I don't know how it is," resumed Lord Walter. "I haven't more spiwit, and I haven't more mewit than other people, and yet I certainly am weceived with gweater considewation wherever I go, than if I were nobody at all."

"And I suppose you are very much puzzled to know why?"

"It don't pwevent my sleeping you see, Cammy; still, it passes my compwehension."

"Shall I tell you why it is?"

"Pway do."

"Simply because you belong to a body which has lustre and renown to spare for each and all of its members. When two or three of the coloured lamps of an illumination go out, nobody perceives the difference, and each comes in for its share of credit. But, if too

many were to be extinguished by the wind, the spectators might certainly grow disrespectful in their remarks, both upon them and upon the whole exhibition. That's what we must remember, and act accordingly, Mr. Walter."

"Very well said, indeed, Lady Camilla," observed I.

"The mowal is certainly vewy good ; but I don't mean to distwess myself on account of the genewal intewests of the awistocwacy, or of the countwy "

"For shame, Walter !" exclaimed Lavinia ; "you know I hate hearing you talk in this manner."

"It's the twuth, my deawest—the honest twuth. You will find plenty of others to get their heads bwoken, and gwateful for the opportunity too."

"And most fortunate it is for old England !" cried Cammy. "Where should we be without them ?"

"Twue enough," replied his lordship,

choosing his cigar preparatory to his habitual stroll towards the stables—"twue enough, Cammy. There must be some who stwuggle for the gweatness of the state, and others who enjoy the wesult. I am to be weckoned among the latter; I am contented to enjoy the we-
sult. And so is our fwieand, Calcwaft, by-the-by."

"Don't you compare yourself to Mr. Calcraft, you ridiculous creature, whatever you do!" cried Lady Camilla, with Miss Vinny's apparent consent.

"What's the diffewence, old fellow? I don't say it in dispawagement of Calcwaft, quite the contwawy; but I don't see the gweat diffewence between the pwinciples of our conduct."

"The mule and the war-horse must both take their rest occasionally, but there is a difference between them, Master Walter, even in the hour of their intensest repose. Mr. Calcraft has reasons of his own for being quiescent enough just now; but you can see,

from his every look and word, that his life has never been one of torpor, inaction, and indolence. Even now he is performing the homelier duties of his sphere—”

“ That is impwoving his pwoperty, and getting in his wents. I believe I could do just so much, Cammy, if I were connected with the tewwitowial intewest. I do not see, however, that he is pwematurely destwoyng his constitution by over-exertion in the cause of the countwy and of the awistocwacy.”

I had acknowledged, by a deep bow, Lady Camilla’s previous allusion to my quiescent energies ; but I now thought myself justified in hazarding a passing observation on my own account.

“ You must remember, Lord Walter, that I see no present opening for serving my country, and that I have no right to stand forth as the champion of the aristocracy.”

“ And yet you would fight our battles, on a pinch, for all that, wouldn’t you ?” said Lady Camilla.

“ Yes, most earnestly, if you will be true to yourselves. I dread nothing more than to see the rational and respectable objects of public reverence torn down and trampled in the dust. I know that their place cannot long remain vacant, and that we should soon be constrained to bend the knee before far unworthier idols.”

“ Vewy well put,” said Lord Walter. “ Now you see, Cammy, to wesume:—as we are weckoned, even by Calcwaft, who is a man of gweat understanding, instwuction, and all that, to be wational and wespectable objects of wevewence, I don’t see why we are to distwess ourselves any more about the matter. I shall, therefore, wemove to the stables; and from there, in about half an-hour, to the garden, to see if the stwawbewwies are getting wedder at all.”

It struck me on this, as on many similar occasions, that neither of his fair cousins were extremely edified with Lord Walter’s views when he would undergo the labour of ex-

pounding them. But the subject in hand was usually dismissed, when he would leave us, by Lady Camilla's familiar observation :

“ He is a good old fellow—Walter ; but he certainly will never set the Thames on fire.”

Thus the conversation would likewise have ended, no doubt, in this instance, had not Lady Camilla seemingly required some more direct adhesion on my part to her warlike propensities.

“ Come now, after all, Mr. Calcraft,” continued she, “ don't you think that we, the aristocracy, wishing as we do to hold our ground, are quite right to join heart and soul in the war, seeing how popular it is ?”

“ You would be still more justified, perhaps, Lady Camilla, were you equally convinced that it is wise and politic.”

“ But don't you believe it to be all that ? How provoking you are to be sure ! You are always making other people commit themselves, and never expressing your own opinions.”

“ Why should I, Lady Camilla, especially

in this instance? When a great popular passion bursts forth, you will seldom be at a loss to find those who will promote or embrace it. The unreflecting many are hurried away by the clamour, or themselves affected by the contagion; the reflecting few have too often their own views and interests to consult. Should we feel doubtful and perplexed there where we see the welfare, the very lives of millions to be at stake—to whom should we apply for guidance? The statesman, whose experience might enlighten us, is but watching the stream which is to bear in triumph the bark of his fortunes. The divine, whose pious counsel might lead us, is seeking in some tortured texts the grounds for his blasphemous assent. The peer has to consult the interests of his order; the commoner, the wishes of his constituents. There are plenty, without me, to pander to the momentary delusion—plenty who are anxious, above all, to shun the imputations so plentifully cast upon those who would reason with the phrenzy of the hour.

Why should the insignificant unit of my voice
be added to so stupendous a sum?"

"Well, I am not so scrupulous," cried Lady Camilla. "I strike in, whether I am to be heard or not. Dauntless and I are more moderate than most people; but we consider any man, woman, or child in England, who has a doubt about the war, to be a Russian, or ten times worse. After all, they have a right, though not a clear one, to defend their old barbarous hearths and homes; but, we have no right to side with them in any way against our own countrymen. So you had better mind what you are about, Mr. Calcraft, upon my word, you had," proceeded the fair patriot, seizing her newly-acquired garden-instrument; "you had better mind what you are about, or we will spade you."

"No, we won't," cried Lavinia, rushing to the rescue. "I do admire him so for not joining in this odious clamour."

"Then, if I let you off this time, Mr. Calcraft," continued Lady Cammy, "will you,

like a dear, good man, come with us to the garden, and spend the whole of this lovely morning there?"

I willingly agreed to this proposal, and not for that day alone. True to the expected time, the drag returned from Dreadnought, perfectly safe, and well loaded with the varied promise of our new flower beds. If anything could surpass the good taste and industry with which these were laid down, it was the intense pleasure which the occupation evidently gave to the two fairies under whose magic wand the mimic, but gorgeous creations sprang up, and the satisfaction with which the progress was hailed by the inheritor himself.

CHAPTER III.

IN the meanwhile, my principal guest had been in nowise so much neglected, in her intercourse with her relations, as she has been of late in our homely narrative. Not only did Miss Dieaway make it an invariable rule to spend several hours with her mother every day, but Lady Camilla would frequently wait on her, and I was myself a constant and regular visitor. Though my cousin still pertinaciously refused to exert herself so far as to join us below, her health and spirits both appeared to me gradually to improve, and I could not but be struck by the increasing quiescence and serenity of her mind. I trust I may acquit

myself from the folly of having, in the remotest degree, attributed these auspicious symptoms to the cause pointed at by Lady Camilla, during our memorable conversation in the summer-house. I did not, however, the less rejoice to find that, notwithstanding her voluntary seclusion, Lady Edward's prolonged residence under my roof, was by no means irksome to her, and my efforts to induce a little more sociability on her part were unremitting. These, as we have seen, were long unattended by any favourable result. But, at length, having obtained that she would join me in an afternoon drive, I also received a promise, which was faithfully kept, that she would dine with us on the following day.

The announcement of this concession, when reported by me at breakfast-time, produced a visible commotion among my younger guests. Lavinia turned very red and then very pale—Lady Camilla seemed a little taken back—and even Lord Walter himself significantly opened his eyes and stroked his moustaches. A few

seconds of utter silence ensued and, as usual, it was broken by the fair daughter of the Darealls.

"I say, Walter," cried she, "how do you feel?"

"Tolewably composed, Cammy—tolewisably composed; but it wequires considewation,"

"It does, indeed. Now, Mr. Calcraft," continued she, "it is only for once in a way, is it, that she is coming down?"

"Sheis not going to make a genewal pwactice of it, is she?"

"That wouldn't do at all," said Lady Camilla.

"And would constitute an unwawwantable intwusion."

"I am very much afraid," replied I, "that my cousin's promise applies to this day alone."

"It is wather a dangewous expewiment for her, don't you think, Vinny, my tweasure?" proceeded his lordship. "These wooms below are so much larger and colder than the wooms up-stairs."

“Perhaps they are, Walter; yet, I cannot but rejoice that mamma should once more feel equal to the exertion.”

“We rejoice, of course you do. So does Cammy, so do I, egweciously, so does Calcwraft, and natuwally enough, too, as it was his contwivance duwing that dwive yesterday;—don’t you think it was, Cammy?”

“I don’t think it, I know it. And rather vicious and venomous it was of him, too; but we will serve him out for that and other little matters, some day. Ah! ah!”

“It shows he is not to be twusted at all;—that no weliance can be placed upon him.”

“Indeed, if I could have anticipated that so simple an incident could have produced so much perturbation,” observed I, laughing, “I certainly should not have expressed so strong a wish.”

“Hurrah! hurrah!” shouted Lady Camilla.

“Huwwah! huwwah!” responded her cousin.

“We have it by his own account,” resumed her ladyship, “but he mustn’t affect to mis-

understand us. What he calls our perturbation is solely on account of Lady E."

"Of course; what else but the fear that she should be thrown back."

"Precisely,"

"You must agree with me, Cammy, in thinking it is very impudent on her part."

"The very height of folly; but that is her look-out—not ours—and we must attend to our own business."

"Just so, Cammy, and take care that we are not thrown back too."

"Exactly."

"To do right, old fellow," continued his lordship, "we should strike out before hand some general line of conduct most likely to prevent any complication arising."

"To be sure," responded Lady Camilla; "and, in the first place, I should recommend you not to be tied to Vinny's apron-strings during the whole evening."

"You are right there, I think. However heart-wending the sacrifice, Vinny and I must be strangers to-night."

"I should hope so, indeed," said lady Cammy.

"Another adowable, unimaginable, incom-pawable cweature must keep me wiveted to her vewy side. Who is she to be, Cammy?"

"Aunt E. herself, of course."

"Aunt E., Cammy?—not a bit of it. That would be too gwoss, and wouldn't do at all. It must be some wemarkably entwancing cweature with cewulean blue eyes, golden bwown locks—"

"That will do, that will do," interposed Lady Camilla. "You will be well able to make a fool of us poor girls, without any rehearsal; but I don't quite see the necessity of this part of it."

"It will bear out, you know, Cammy, what Lady Dweadnought has always said, and which, I am sure, has more than once pwo-duced some impwession upon Lady E."

"What may that be, Mr. Wiseacre?"

"You know vewy well, Cammy."

"No I don't," replied his cousin, a most

enchanting blush affording at the same time small confirmation of her assertion.

“That, after all, I was as much in love with you, as with Vinny, and would probably end by mawwying you.”

“It is excessively kind and considerate both of Lady D. and of you to dispose of poor Cammy in this way ; but if she consents to act the appropriate part for this evening, it must be to promote the opposite result. So you won’t be jealous will you, Vinny ?”

“Jealous of you, my dearest Cammy ! You know that would be impossible. But what am I to do ?”

“You ? Never appear to give Walter a thought of course ; but occasionally, as often as possible, cast a languishing, supplicating, expiring, and every-thing look in the direction of Mr. Calcraft.”

“Vewy good, vewy good,” interposed Lord Walter.

“It will answer two purposes,” proceeded his cousin : “throw Lady E. off her guard,

and punish that odious wretch over there for his share in the matter."

"I don't see, Cammy, that it would be the punishment he deserves for having brought down this twibulation upon us."

"The punishment will be in the contrast, Walter ; smiled upon and all that sort of thing by Vinny one night, and the next morning hated again like the dreadful, horrible enemy and traitor in the camp that he is. I promise you she won't spare him, will you, Vinny ? Give him a proper glimpse of Heaven this evening, and we'll tumble him into the mud again to-morrow properly."

"I would not like to carry that sort of thing too far, Cammy dear," observed Lavinia, with a look of the most tantalizing compassion.

"No ; pray don't, indeed," was my reply.

"One would think that he was laughing at us, and defying us!" cried Lady Camilla. "I only wish that I had the doing of it—I would soon bring him to his senses."

"But are you quite sure, Lady Camilla, that I am not in this respect as much in your power as in Miss Vinny's?"

"Oh ! I daresay, that won't do, Mr. Calcraft ; but I am not going to rake up old by-gones. Besides, my time will be fully taken up with Walter."

"At all events, I must repeat," resumed I, "that my share of responsibility is not at all so great as you all imagine. I only said yesterday what in mere civility, as master of the house, I was bound occasionally to repeat."

"Oh ! ah !" retorted Lady Cammy. "And you didn't at all wish that she should break in upon us just as everything was going on so smoothly and well ?"

"No, Lady Camilla, why should I ?"

"Why should you ? That's rather good. You don't belong to the enemy at all ? But we will face you : I am delighted that she is coming now, and I do hope that she won't throw us over. There is nothing like difficulties, to be sure, for sharpening up the wits.

When Mr. Calcraft brought out his news, my first impression was that we should all invalid for the evening ; my next, that Walter, at least, should keep his room—”

“ I wouldn’t have kept my woom at any pwice to-day, old fellow,” interposed his lordship. “ Wedhill tells me that it is to be the first day of stwabewwies.”

“ Well, never mind the ‘ stwabewwies,’ ” proceeded Lady Camilla, mockingly. “ We have now, I hope, hit upon a device which will neutralize the evil, and, perhaps, even extract a little good out of it. But, mind you, Mr. Calcraft,” continued she, drawing up to me with the most enchantingly-threatening mien, “ if you let lady E. suppose that there is anything out of the way, or got up for the occasion, in our mutual bearing this evening, I will cut you up into little triangular bits no bigger than my finger.”

“ Lady Camilla, you may rely upon my discretion.”

“ All right. Now, who’s for the garden ?

I am going down to see how the young geraniums are budding."

Once more Lady Camilla led the way ; and, as usual, none remained very far behind.

In compliance with a gentle suggestion which I had hazarded, Lady Edward was all smiles and graciousness when she re-appeared amongst us before dinner. To be sure, she was destined to witness nothing which could give her annoyance ; for, while Lady Camilla and Lord Walter were whispering together in a further corner of the room, Miss Vinny was seated by me, gleaning information upon various matters with a sort of school-girlish humility which was not entirely native. Again, when we went into dinner, my cousin, of course, took Lady Camilla's usual place at my right ; but, for that on my left, a gentle contest ensued which ended in Miss Dieaway being my neighbour, and Lord Walter that of his aunt. Nor was this all. Every look, every word, was in accordance with the pre-ordained parts. Lord Walter divided his assiduous attentions

pretty equally between his aunt and Lady Cammy ; the latter was on her best and most subdued behaviour, and Lavinia would actually suffer no further attentions on my part to her mother, than she felt it to be positively incumbent upon me to bestow. Thanks to these various concessions to the presumed feelings of my principal guest, a tone of courteous harmony prevailed from the first, very different, to be sure, from the genial freedom of our usual conversation in her absence, but happily still farther removed from the smouldering contentiousness, which we might have apprehended. Indeed, the universal effort to prevent any such feeling from arising was not confined to these general demonstrations. Every opinion expressed by Lady Edward was most deferentially applauded and re-echoed by her nephew and niece ; the greatest pleasure was repeatedly manifested at her re-appearance amongst us ; and all these tokens of regard and goodwill were as amply responded to as they were proffered.

Still, it is an irksome and critical experiment for persons who have been intimately associating to assume towards each other, and long to maintain, a style of intercourse wholly at variance with their habits and character. The mere apprehension of any unguarded word or look, will, of itself, impose a somewhat chilling constraint, even upon the readiest of wit, and the freest of manner. In this respect, Lady Camilla herself could not wholly overcome the latent influence, and I felt fully conscious of being subjected to it myself. My chief endeavour, therefore, was to introduce and enlarge upon matters of conversation entirely unconnected with our habitual topics, indeed, with the secret thoughts of the hour. I availed myself of every pretext for taking the lead, in the hope that my maturer caution might prove more effectual than that of my younger associates. And thus it was, that, towards the end of dinner, as mutual courtesies and compliments were beginning to flag and to fail, I was induced, not without much

gentle pressure, to commit myself to the recital of a bygone adventure of my own.

The occasion which prompted this rash act was as follows. A handsome centre-piece of old plate, which Mr. Redhill had produced in honour of Lady Edward's re-appearance, had excited some admiration. I had admitted that the workmanship and design were considered chaste and rare, and I had insinuated that the circumstances under which it had come into my possession, were stranger and more remarkable still. Upon this, a general cry arose for further particulars; and when I hinted that the narrative would involve a ghost story, the appeal was loudly re-echoed.

"But a ghost story—a real ghost story," observed I, addressing collectively my fairer neighbours. "Am I at all justified in putting your nerves to this test?"

A triple and vehement affirmative was the reply.

"You won't faint, Lady Camilla?"

"I'll try not to—nor Vinny neither—nor

Walter neither—nor Lady Edward neither, though last, not least. Now, do go on—pray go on—for Heaven's sake, go on! We are on the very tip-toe of expectation."

"Well, having entangled myself so far, I suppose I must proceed."

CHAPTER IV.

“ IT was towards the end of the dreary month of November, of the winter before last. The season had been unusually wet and stormy, and my spirits were in perfect harmony with the desolated aspect of nature. I had been so often drenched to the skin in my attempts to continue my usual rides, and close confinement to the house has always been so insupportable to me, that I was induced to strike out for myself a novel pastime. In a secluded corner of the plantations, I had noticed a considerable number of fine oak-trees, eagerly contending for their fair share of the pure air of

heaven with a mass of over-topping fir-trees. These, once upon a time, had been the assiduous nurses of their childhood ; since then they had become the very bane and pest of their existence—a reversal of parts not peculiar to the vegetable creation. This state of things had long been deplored by the observants in such matters. Many a self-constituted woodsman, as he would traverse the rank and loathsome shade of this cover, would sapiently shake his head, and exclaim—“ Oaks must be plentiful in Sir Charles’s grounds, and guineas in his pocket, or he would scarce let such valuable timber moulder away in this fashion.” But Sir Charles had other cares and thoughts on his mind than the welfare of his trees ; and, by a sort of traditional respect for some undefined behest of former days, the stewards of Rockingham Hall had always avoided applying the swift and sure remedy of the axe to the undisputed evil. I felt inclined for once to over-rule the general scruple.

“ ‘ It strikes me,’ said I to my bailiff one

morning, ‘that the Barham Wood requires a little thinning.’

“‘The Barham Wood,’” replied he, looking very grave—‘the Barham Wood, Sir Charles.’

“‘Yes, the Barham Wood; it looks as if it had not had a hand for some time.’

“‘The Barham Wood has never been handled by me, nor, I believe, by my father before me, Sir Charles.’

“‘Why not?’

“‘It never was understood, Sir Charles, that the Barham Wood was to run with the other plantations.’

“‘And yet it can claim no exemption from the general laws of nature. Don’t you think that we should clear a little about the oaks?’

“‘They certainly cannot thrive as they are, Sir Charles. Nothing will grow without top air.’

“‘And wouldn’t it be better for us and for those that come after us, that they should grow and thrive than that they should perish outright?’

“‘They would soon be good timber, Sir

Charles, if they had top air, and timber is well up with the war.'

" 'Then let us set to work at once, and give them a fair chance.'

" I thought I was merely assenting to Mr. Dogleaf's proposition, but he looked graver than ever.

" 'The days are very short now, Sir Charles,' muttered he, ' and we have a great deal on hand.'

" I find the days rather long, Dogleaf, I am sorry to say, and I have nothing to do. So make me out a couple of smart lads to-morrow morning, and I will set about clearing the wood myself.'

" Mr. Dogleaf seemed surprised at my determination, but relieved by the prospect of bearing no share himself in the execution. He promised me his two best hands in the felling line and, early on the ensuing day, I set lustily to work with them.

" The morning was cold and raw, but not unfavourable for the sort of task we had before

us. My associates were two sturdy, strapping youngsters, who would have cut down the royal oak at a sign from their employer, and were guiltless of any reverence for the shades of Barham Wood. Right cheerily did our work progress until one o'clock, when we held hard and dispatched as much bread, cheese, and ale as would have satisfied half-a-dozen giants. We then set to again, and were steadily advancing when, while taking breath after a most complicated stroke, I perceived old Jones standing close beside me."

"I think you know old Jones, Lady Camilla?" inquired I, interrupting my narrative.

"Old Jones? I hope I do," was the reply.
"I think Vinny does too, don't you, Vinny?"

"That dear, darling old man, with hair really whiter than snow?—to be sure I do, Cammy."

"Quite the 'oldest inhabitant,'" rejoined Lady Camilla. "He has seen the beginning of everything from the deluge, and the ark, and the creation; he would fetch money at a

fair, old Jones would. Well, what did he say to the cutting up or cutting down of the what-do-you call-them plantations?"

"He certainly looked grave—very grave," resumed I; "so much so, that I felt doubly inclined to enter into conversation with him."

"'Well, old Jones,' I said, 'I am always glad to see you. Quite well, I hope.'

"'Tolerable well in health, Sir Charles, thankee—tolerable well for a man of fourscore year and fifteen — fourscore year and fifteen.'

"'And you are come to have a look at our works?'

"'Yes, Sir Charles,' resumed he seriously, almost severely. 'I couldn't trust my ears, which are none so bad for fourscore year and fifteen; but I couldn't trust them when I hee'rd that you was a tampering with the Barham Wood—the Barham Wood.'

"'I am only giving a little air to the oaks, Jones," said I, almost apologetically, 'which they very much require. Don't you think it is full time that I should?'

"Old Jones shook his head and replied that he had always understood that the Barham Wood was not to run with the other woods.

"And why so, do you think, Jones?"

"I have always understood it were to be so—I have always understood it were to be so. It were so in your father's time, Sir Charles, and it were so in your grandfather's time."

"Did they give particular orders to that effect, do you know, Jones?"

"I can't say, Sir Charles, I can't say. They always thought it were to be so—they always thought it were to be so."

"Despairing of obtaining much more information on this head, I altered the current of my inquiries.

"This wood was planted by my grandfather, wasn't it Jones?"

"No it warn't, Sir Charles, no it warn't. It were your great-grandfather."

"My great-grandfather! Indeed?"

"Yes, Sir Charles, and my own father see'd him do it."

“ ‘ Your own father, Jones ! Dear me, how much shorter must have been the pilgrimage of the richer generation than of the poorer ! ’

“ ‘ God’s will be done—God’s will be done. My own father see’d it planted, Sir Charles, though the trees is awful poles, to be sure.’

“ ‘ About what year, Jones, should you think ? ’

“ ‘ I couldn’t say, Sir Charles, I couldn’t say : my father were but a boy when he see’d it done. There was great disturbances in England about that time, I’ve hee’rd say—great disturbances, and an invasion like talked of.’

“ ‘ An invasion, Jones ? that must have been in the time of Bonaparte.’

“ ‘ Bonaparte ! Lord love you ; Bonaparte ! I were a full-grown man long and long before the stir about him began. And yet, I warn’t born till my father were thirty.’

“ ‘ Ah ! what can your stir then have been, Jones ? what was it all about ? ’

“ ‘ I couldn’t say, Sir Charles, I couldn’t say exactly ; but there were much commotion iu

the land. All about a man who was always to have been king—but never was king.'

"‘Oh! the Pretender, I suppose?’

"‘That’s just what they called him—that’s just what they called him.’

"‘Dear me! So this wood was planted by my great-grandfather, about the famous year '45.’

"‘Before the great troubles, as I have he’d tell, Sir Charles; but not long before.’

"‘Not long before; probably in forty-four or forty-three. I wonder what my great-grandfather would say to this day’s work?’

"Jones looked very blank.

"‘I suppose, he intended that the wood should be thinned out, some day or another.’

"‘He never intended, Sir Charles, that the Barham Wood were to run with the other woods. I even he’d my father say that there was stricter orders against trespassing in this here wood than in the kitchen-garden—than in the kitchen-garden.’

"‘How very strange!’

“ ‘ There would have been steel-traps and spring-guns set over the whole of it, only they that set ‘un must have trespassed ; they couldn’t have set ‘un and not have trespassed. But the warning-posts about ‘un was up in every quarter—in every quarter.’ ”

“ ‘ They were, indeed, Jones ; I can well remember having seen them in my younger days.’ ”

“ ‘ Ah ! welladay !—welladay !’ resumed my companion, preparing to withdraw, “ we shall have the rain soon ; and, now that I have see’d the work, I must needs believe it. But I’m sorry ye did it, Sir Charles—I’m sorry ye did it.’ ”

“ When old Jones had first joined me, I was in a great heat, the result of my strenuous exertions ; but, while talking with him, I gradually felt the chill winter-breeze casting, as it were, a shroud of ice over my whole frame. The rain, too, which the dismal howl of the nor’-wester had been heralding of late, was beginning now to fall ; so, without seeking to prolong

the conversation, I set to again with my axe, in the hope of restoring the genial current of my circulation. But the unpropitious change of the weather hastening the early nightfall, I had to dismiss my hired associates before I felt inclined to draw off myself.

“ They who are acquainted with labours of this description well know how eagerly the unprofessional votary will cling to the accomplishment of any self-imposed portion of the task. They will, therefore, understand, in a measure, how, having set my heart upon the complete dismemberment of the last fallen fir-tree, I should have proceeded still with my undertaking, while the daylight was absolutely failing me. The stump of one huge limb, which had been smashed in the fall, was fast lodged in the ground. I had detached it from the trunk, but I could not succeed in uplifting it from the soil. In vain did I batter it in every direction, with the head of my axe ; it seemed fixed in something far more retentive than the clotted mould at my feet.

" 'I'll have you out, old gentleman, for all that,' muttered I. ' I'll have you out, and lying flat and fair by your stem, though I pass the whole night at the job. You will find that I am as obstinate as you.'

" I tried force and persuasion again and again; and again and again I failed; so I thought I would give artifice a chance. Calling upon my axe to do duty as best it could for a spade, I proceeded to clear, and clear away the earth around the embedded fragment, so as to ascertain how so secure a lodgment could have been effected. The unresisting mould had been thus removed to a depth of nearly two feet, when the sharp edge of my tool encountered an obstacle of the most unyielding description.

" ' It can't be a stone,' said I; ' it sounds like iron or steel.'

" I cleared away a little more, and the mystery was solved. I had lit upon a thick oaken board, strongly riveted and clasped, apparently the lid of a very large, heavy chest, into which,

propelled by the full force of the fall, the mutinous stump had penetrated, and was firmly wedged. Gladly would I have inquired further, but the misty night-fall was fast growing so opaque as to preclude my over-strained eye-sight from performing its office any longer. I therefore replaced, as best I could, the scattered earth, and wended my way home-wards with the sapient resolution of thinking the matter over.

“I carefully changed all my wet clothes; but neither the most liberal applications of the flesh brush, nor the dry warm suit which I had donned, nor the blazing fire and the steaming cheer of the dining-room, nor an unusual libation of hot punch succeeded in imparting any permanent glow to my cold-stricken frame. By the burning and roaring hearth, I felt as if the chill blast was piercing me as truly and as keenly as during my conversation with old Jones, and the sensation was accompanied by an unusual disinclination to apply myself to my book. I therefore had recourse to a species of

hybrid occupation set apart for such occasions as the present: the looking over and destroying an accumulation of old family papers which were mouldering in a recess of the library. I searched for a fair complement of these. I placed them on a table by the side of my arm-chair, and determining that sleep should interrupt my task as often as inclination would prompt, I betook myself to my cursory perusal.

“Was not I alone?”

“Mr. Redhill had long since retired, and no one but he would have intruded upon my privacy at such an hour. Indeed, there was not a distant nook or corner of the room which was not pretty clearly lit up; and yet not a sign or token could I distinguish of any mortal thing. Still, there was no overcoming the feeling that I was watched, intently watched, and that each of my proceedings was the object of the very closest scrutiny. Long and strenuously did I endeavour in every conceivable way, either to overcome, or to account for the impression,

but it was all and absolutely in vain. Twice I actually rose to search, candle in hand, every portion and recess of the room, yet nothing could I discover which might tend in the remotest degree to explain or remove my sensation. At length, when harassed and almost exhausted by the perplexing strangeness of the incident, I raised my eyes in very desperation towards the ceiling, they encountered the actual gaze which, by its unacknowledged influence, had been troubling me so long."

"What can it have been?" cried Miss Vinny, growing pale with eagerness.

"Beware," resumed I; "it is even now upon us."

Miss Dieaway uttered a faint shriek, Lady Camilla firmly repressed her native inclination to re-echo it, and Lady Edward seemed a little startled, so that Lord Walter alone retained the full amount of his unconcern.

"It is even now upon us," repeated I; "and watching us as intently as then."

All looked around, curiously, if not anx-

iously, but it was Lady Camilla who first lighted upon some clue to the mystery.

“I have it—I have it, I think!” cried she; “don’t let’s faint for a minute. Who is that old gentleman in the snuff-coloured suit, over the chimney-piece?”

“He is my great-grandfather.”

“That’s all right; the very man who planted the Barham Wood, and who settled it wasn’t to run with the other plantations.”

“Precisely.”

“Is the portrait by Sir Joshua?”

“It is, Lady Camilla. One of his earlier efforts.”

“It strikes me as a very good one, and the eyes appear to have a peculiar property of peering into your innermost thoughts, in whatever part of the room you may be. Was he an amiable man?”

“His chroniclers have omitted to mention that qualification. To his descendants he is best known as their great money-making and money-saving ancestor.”

"He looks like that sort of thing to any amount, certainly, Mr. Calcraft"

"And so it was he who was gazing so fixedly upon you that evening?" added Miss Lavinia.

"It was, indeed. And when I proceeded to examine a bundle of papers docketed and marked 'My grandfather's,' in my father's hand, I thought the old gentleman would positively have stepped down from his frame to wrest them from me.

"Still," proceeded I, with my narrative, "I continued my labours, committing to the flames whatever seemed unimportant, and reserving a very limited selection for a second investigation. At length, my attention was particularly arrested by a sort of memorandum, written in the same hand as the others, which I assumed to be my great-grandfather's, and bearing a note or two, in what I knew to be my grandfather's writing. The said paper contained, at the outset, a sort of inventory of whatever common plate and articles of furni-

ture at theold hall could be converted into immediate value, and a rough statement of the amount which might thus be realized. I was aware that my great-grandfather, though far too cautious heedlessly to compromise himself for a doubtful cause, had always had a secret leaning towards the Jacobite interest, and the significant date of 1745 affixed to the document, led me to imagine that, at the time it was drawn up, my ancestor had contemplated the possibility of being obliged to leave England for a season. The paper concluded with the following words, in the same hand as the inventory:—"The above, exclusive of plate, jewels, cash, &c., in the B. P.; the amount, say three thousand pounds, equally available at call." On the margin, in note, was inscribed, in my grandfather's writing, the query: "What on earth can the B. P. mean?"

"The B. P.—the B. P.," repeated I; "what on earth can it mean?"

"I have it—I have it!" cried Lady Camilla, triumphantly; "haven't you, Vinny?"

"No, indeed, Cammy."

"Oh! you gooseygoo, and princess of goslings! the Barham Plantation, of course."

"To be sure—to be sure," answered Lavinia; "it was too stupid of me."

"I suppose the old wagamuffin had gone and buwied his tweasure there," observed Lord Walter, conclusively.

"We shall see—we shall see," responded the eager Lady Camilla. "It wouldn't have been a very bad dodge, just as the young trees are beginning to start up. But we mustn't interrupt Mr. Calcraft."

"Well," resumed I, "there is no denying that the possible connexion between the mysterious initials, and the equally mysterious chest which I had lighted upon that very afternoon, most forcibly occurred to my mind. There was nothing, however, to be done just at present, but to think the matter over, and this I certainly did to my heart's content."

"And dreamt it over too, I make no doubt," said Lady Camilla.

"I dare say I did," proceeded I; "but my night, as far as I can recollect, was feverish and restless in the extreme. It struck me, as if the chill which had crept upon me whilst I was talking to old Jones, was clinging fast and still faster to me, notwithstanding every appurtenance and device which had been applied to expel it. And the sickly sensation was yet increased by a sort of impatient apprehension that, if I did not hurry to secure the presumed treasure, it might yet elude my grasp."

"If I had been you, Calcwaft, I should have pwoceeded to the spot with a lantern and wemoved the old twunk at once."

"Such was also my inspiration, Lord Walter, saving that I omitted the lantern, as it struck me that, when I started, the early dawn afforded me just light enough for the enterprise."

Piercing, in truth, was the breath of the receding winter-night, as I groped forward on my lonely way ; but, in due time, I reached the promised spot. There, everything appeared

to be as I had left it on the previous afternoon—the fallen tree—the rebellious stump—the earth profusely thrown up all around it and, above all, the fractured lid of the old chest itself. As nothing could be accomplished so long as the huge limb remained riveted in the box, I again set to work at separating them. Long and lustily did I labour, and I was merely pausing an instant for breath, when I suddenly perceived that I was not alone."

"Old Jones had returned, I suppose," said Lady Camilla, "to shake his head at you again."

"No, indeed. It was neither old Jones, nor my fellow-labourers of the previous day, nor anyone whom I had ever seen before in his mortal semblance; and yet I could not for a moment mistake him. It was my great-grandfather himself, and who but he, just exactly as you see him there, with his stiff little periwig, his dark-brown suit and, more than all, his searching and relentless look."

"That's vewy stwange, indeed," observed Lord Walter.

"Oh, don't interrupt," cried Lavinia; "it is getting so interesting."

"I am not intewwupting—I am only saying it is vewy stwange."

"Of course it is," cried Lady Cammy; "ghost stories generally are. Pray, go on, Mr. Calcraft; we are all excited to a degree."

"Well, the apparition, or whatever it was, looked so fixedly at me, as if expecting that I should commence the conversation, that I could not, in mere civility, but wish him a very good morning. He responded by a formal inclination of the head, and then proceeded to business at once.

"'You find that timber valuable, I presume,' said he, in a slow, grim, sarcastic style of par lance, such as had never before grated upon my ear.

"'It will prove so, sir, I trust,' replied I, deferentially.

"'At all events it won't have cost you much either in time, trouble or money.'

“‘No, indeed, sir ; nothing but the hire of a couple of men for a week or so. But I am only clearing round the oaks.’

“‘Ah ! ah ! ah ! clearing round the oaks, ah ! ah ! ah !” repeated the personage with the most sardonic grin. ‘Only a little thinning. Ah ! ah ! And hadn’t you understood that the Barham wood was never to run with the other woods ?’

“‘There certainly is an old tradition, or superstition, or something to that effect in the neighbourhood. But, to be frank with you, I have not thought its purport binding upon me.’

“‘Hem ! I should very much recommend you to pause though, before it be too late.’

“There was something so authoritative, and threatening in the tone of this warning, that I felt myself compelled at once, either to give way, or firmly to withstand it. I chose the latter course.”

“And perfectly right you,” interjected Lady Camilla.

“‘I am afraid that it is already too late, my

dear sir," continued I, to the snuff coloured gentleman. "Several of these oaks are seriously injured, and the loss will be nobody's but mine if they are utterly ruined."

"'Ah ! ah ! ah ! the oaks ! I suppose it's for the oaks that you are out here alone at this time of the day ? The oaks—very good ; ah ! ah ! ah !'

"I could observe that, as our conversation proceeded, my great grandfather had been stealthily shuffling himself forward so as to take up his stand right over the buried chest ; and that, as it were, mechanically, and with apparent unconcern, he was treading down the earth upon it again.

"'Take care,' observed I, civilly, 'pray take care. That earth was thrown up designedly.'

"'Ah ! ah ! ah !' repeated the apparition. 'For the sake of the oaks, I suppose.'

"I saw that he knew as much as I did about the matter—perhaps, something more—so that I attempted no further concealment.

“‘I certainly have accidentally discovered this chest,’ continued I, striking upon the lid with the butt of my axe, ‘and I suspect it to contain something very valuable.’

“‘Something very valuable lying out here in the woods? That would be rather strange!’

“‘Would it not be stranger still,’ replied I, ‘that a person should be at the trouble of burying here a chest containing nothing of any worth?’

“‘Who told you that it was a chest at all?’

“‘Nobody, to be sure; but I feel confident that it is one. Do just stand aside, that I may uncover it a little more.’

“‘But my visitor, or rather visitant, would not give way, and continued, in his solemn and almost ferocious tone—

“‘How do you know that it is not a coffin—the hallowed resting-place of some brave and good man? Many such fell in England, and were secretly buried, about the time that this wood was planted.’

“‘The box appears wider than any two coffins,’ replied I; ‘but if you will but stand back, we shall soon know more.’

“‘Stand back yourself,’ was the fierce reply. ‘The ground may be sacred.’

“‘I see no tokens of consecration,’ said I, ‘and am determined to proceed. Do stand back yourself, there’s a good man, once for all.’

“This time my request was enforced by so determined a shove, that I remained complete master of the disputed ground, and such good use did I make of my opportunity, that the lid was soon wholly uncovered and partly broken open. Gracious heavens! what a sight then met the gaze of both the beholders! Gold and silver in plate, in jewellery, in untold numbers and varieties of coins, nay, in shapeless ingots; and, more precious than all, diamonds, rubies, and pearls, such as burst upon the entranced vision of Aladin in the fast fled hours of his utmost prosperity. When these were first disclosed, fearful was the

howl of rage which broke from the apparition; but far more thrillingly still was it re-echoed when I exclaimed in rapture:

“ ‘ Mine, all mine ! ’

“ ‘ They are not yours : they are mine,’ yelled my ghastly antagonist. ‘ Who was it that purchased, secured and accumulated them ? Who buried them here, alone, in the dead of night, in this very wood, planted out, three years before, for no other purpose than fully to secrete the monies and treasure ? They are mine, I say—mine alone.’

“ ‘ My good friend,’ replied I, ‘ you are labouring under a most serious error, at all events in your chronology. Whoever you may be or have been, I am now the sole inheritor of all here.’

“ ‘ Not of this—not of this,’ shrieked my opponent ; ‘ these were no part of the entail, nor were they ever bequeathed to any one. They are mine alone, for ever—for ever. Stand back, I say, as you value the peace of your mind and the rest of your soul—stand back, I tell you.’

“This time he was the aggressor, and fierce
was the struggle which ensued.”

“Hurrah ! hurrah !” shouted Lady Camilla ;
“I am so glad that you held your ground.
How did it all end ?”

“I found my strength fully equal to that of
my adversary ; but he possessed a direful ad-
vantage over me. Wherever his sepulchral
hand rested, it imparted to me the coldness of
the grave itself ; and when, at length, it struck
full upon my heart, the pulsation of my life-
blood seemed to cease, and I fell, breathless
and senseless, to the ground. I could well
hear the savage scream of exultation with
which my defeat was hailed. It died off for a
time, merged, as it were, into the distant roar
of a storm-tossed ocean ; and then the clearer
and more distinct sounds became audible once
more, though divested, this time, of any other
accent, saving those of pity and dismay.

“‘Oh, Lord have mercy upon me !—oh,
bless us and save us ! here’s an awful business.
But he is coming-to again. You are coming-
to, aren’t you, Sir Charles—oh, dear !’

“ Such were poor Susan, the housemaid’s, exclamations, as she raised my head from the ground.”

“ Susan!—what on earth was she doing in the wood?”

“ In the wood, Lady Camilla! are you quite sure that we were in the wood?”

“ Of course. Wasn’t it in the wood that you had the scuffle with the old gentleman about the treasure?”

“ Take care, Cammy dear,” observed Lavinia; “ perhaps it was all a dream.”

“ How all a dream? The clearing of the wood—the conversation with Jones—the finding of the chest?”

“ No, no, dearest, not that part: but after he had come home very feverish, and had sat down by the dining-room fire, to look over the old papers.”

“ Well, did you ever! I certainly deserve to be packed off to school again. And that horrid Calcraft, who was pawning it all upon us like a true bill! I don’t quite see now where the dream really begins.”

"Explain it to her, Miss Vinny," said I.

"Ah! I may not have quite understood it either. What I imagine, however, is that it was all true life until you had found the memorandum about the buried chest—that you fell asleep in your arm-chair soon afterwards,—and that all the rest was a horrible kind of nightmare from which you were aroused, at an early hour, by Susan coming to do the room."

"Precisely," replied I. "And now, Lady Camilla, do you begin to understand all about it?"

"It is breaking upon me by degrees. But, I say, it must have been at rather an early hour that Susan came in, or else the nightmare was somewhat inconveniently prolonged."

"Both were the case, I believe, Lady Camilla. I must doubtless have slept several hours before the last crisis; but as Susan was expecting the sweeps, she was up that morning long before day-light."

"I say, though, Cammy," interposed his lordship. "I suspect our friend must have we-

fwashed himself pweety libewally, both duwing and after his dinner, to have thwown himself into such a state."

"Ah! ah! it wouldn't be discreet to inquire too closely. He owns to having felt very cold, and to having tried punch, and the Lord knows what besides, medicinally, of course."

"And very moderately too, I assure you."

"As to the modewation, the wesult must tell, Calcwaft; but we won't be over cuwious if you pwoceed with the nawaitive, like a good man, and tell us how the tweasure was wecovered."

"Ah! that's all right," assented Lady Camilla. "We left you, or rather you left yourself, in Sukey's arms."

"To be sure," resumed I; "but happily not long to remain there. Within a few minutes, I was nearly myself again, and a libation of very strong tea restored my wonted energies. With them, my full determination to ascertain the true facts of the case, also returned

and I vowed that, if treasure there were, I would take my rightful possession of it in spite of man, ghost or goblin. Having roused up Redhill, in whose discretion and secrecy I knew I could fully confide, and, having armed him with a dark lantern and a spade, I returned with him to the mysterious spot. There, no sort of apparition or interruption interfered with our labours, and so earnestly were they conducted, that the chest was actually dug up, and removed by us to a neighbouring plantation, before my workmen appeared on the ground. To these I allotted their morning's task, and then returned to meet Redhill, who had cleverly contrived to obtain a donkey cart at the house on his own account. Thus, before there was much stir in the yard, we had slipped in there with our precious charge, and safely deposited it in my study."

"And what was in it, after all?" inquired Lady Camilla."

"At first sight, the contents did not bear out the splendid anticipations of my dream.

All within showed as dim and as dark as lead; but a very cursory examination satisfied us that none but the most precious metals were there. The plate, as you may judge by that centre piece, was massive and richly ornamented—there were several bags full of guineas, ducats, and louis d'or; and last, not least, a jewel case with some very respectable diamonds and rubies."

"How much do you think the whole was worth in these days, Charles?" said Lady Edward.

"Not less than four thousand pounds."

"Well done," cried Lady Cammy; "that was a catch and a half. And did no one in the house suspect anything?"

"I won't answer for that, Lady Camilla. Treasure, like murder, you know, will out, and Mr. Redhill and myself having been seen by more than one early riser escorting a donkey and cart at a most cheerless November day-break, so much was soon surmised that I finally allowed the truth to be freely stated.

The consequences were one or two rather imaginative articles in the local papers and an inordinate increase of applications for my subscription. I should also add the quantity of ground surreptitiously stirred ever since, throughout the Barham Wood, which indeed was becoming a succession of pitfalls, until I was obliged to interfere."

"Ah ! ah ! ah ! they were too late to come to supper," said Lady Camilla. "But the snuff-coloured gentleman, your revered ancestor, he never appeared again—did he?"

"No, not to my knowledge. It strikes me that, whenever the subject is mentioned, he looks more than usually gloomy and forbidding, but happily I have never had to encounter him since out of his frame."

CHAPTER V.

THE ghost story and the subsequent remarks to which it gave rise, were so far successful that they carried us, in the most perfect harmony, through the critical stages of dessert and coffee ; but when free again to choose their neighbours and their pursuits, my young friends by no means relaxed their former vigilance. Lord Walter continued to devote himself to his aunt, until summoned by Lady Camilla to a very animated game of chess, in a distant part of the room. On her side. Miss Vinny unceasingly promoted my own garrulous endeavours by a succession of deferential questions ; and when, at last, she was

urged to play for the benefit of the company at large, a slight incident occurred which certainly was well in accordance with the part allotted to her for the evening.

"Play us something, do, Vinny, dear!" exclaimed Lady Cammy from the recess. "Just a note to enliven us."

"We are expiwing for a note," added her companion.

"Well, you must die, that is all I can say," answered Lavinia. "You know I never play before present company."

"How present company?" said her mother. "Are you afraid of playing before me, now?"

"Before you, dearest mamma! no, not at all; you are generally so kind and indulgent. It is before him that I am afraid of playing."

"Before whom, my dear?"

"Before him—this dreadful man here. Don't you remember how he abused my play-ing the first evening and said that it almost made him ill?"

"Nonsense!" cried Lady Cammy—"as if

he didn't hear you every day, now that the windows are always open."

"So he may, but he can also escape, if he chooses, which he could not here so easily. You will see that he won't ask me to play," added she, languishingly.

"I need not, Miss Vinny, for I know that it is perfectly useless."

"That is a civil way," said she, in the same tone, "of casting upon me the burden of the refusal."

"But would you play for him if he were to ask you?" inquired her mother, apparently pleased and amused at the turn the conversation was taking.

"Ah! I don't know what to say," was the tantalizing reply.

"Would you really rather not hear her, Charles?" continued Lady Edward, addressing me.

"How can you think so, my dear Emily?" answered I. "You know how passionately fond

I have always been of music, and that Lavinia's performance is first rate when she chooses."

"Then what is all this nonsense about her never playing before you? Of course, she is bound to do what you wish, particularly in your own house."

"Perhaps you don't remember, Emily, that during our first evening when she was—what shall I say?—rather tired with her journey, you asked, or rather obliged her to play, and then the transcendent merit of the execution was certainly questionable. Unfortunately, I hazarded a word to that effect, which I have since had ample opportunity to regret and repent of."

"Very good; but the upshot of it all is, that you would wish her to play now, if she chooses to play as she can play?"

"More than I can tell."

"Well, but try and say something," continued Lady Edward. "Ladies of all ages like to be entreated. You will play for him now, Vinny, won't you, if he asks you?"

“No, mamma, I certainly won’t.”

The wording of the refusal seemed absolute enough; but the enchanting concession lurked already within the subdued eye and about the wreathing smile.

“What! not if I entreat you, Miss Vinny?”

“Not even if you entreat me.”

“I think that you are rather hard upon him, Vinny,” said her mother; “you can scarcely expect him to say more.”

“I don’t expect him to say anything, dear mamma. I am very comfortable here, and wish to remain so.”

“Yes; but if we are longing to hear you play?”

“That’s another matter, dear mamma. If you wish me to play, of course I will, but it will be to please you and dear Cammy, and not anyone else.”

“Very well,” replied Lady Edward, still diverted and revived by this little contest. “Play to please Cammy and me—but play your best. What shall it be?”

"Whatever you please, dear mamma," answered the child-enchantress, addressing her mother, and looking towards me.

"Well, Charles, what shall it be?" inquired her mother, interpreting the glance alone.

"She was playing the other day a symphony of Haydn, with the most beautiful modulations—her own, I believe."

"And you would like to hear them again?"

"I should, intensely."

"Then try and make out what we mean, there's a dear child, and let us hear it as soon as possible."

Lavinia immediately rose, and if ever mortal senses were entranced into the ideal spheres by the witchcraft of harmony, mine were then and there by that peerless performance.

"That child certainly plays well when she chooses, Charles," observed her mother to me.

"Enchantingly!"

"And she is improved, too, in looks and in manner, since she has been here."

"Very much, I think."

"It really would be a pity, if she were to throw herself away upon that silly monkey over there."

"It certainly would," replied I, abstractedly.

"I see that music still makes you thoughtful, Charles."

"Not uncivilly so, I hope. But the fact is, that I am afraid of incurring fresh disgrace by talking during the performance."

"I see," said Lady Edward, smiling, "and I must not lead you into the temptation."

No further interruption, therefore, occurred until the unwelcome appearance of Mr. Redhill with the tea and its appendages, when, like a liberated school-girl, Vinny jumped up, and proffered her services in a far different line. Soon afterwards, the game of chess was also brought to a close, and we were all very convivial around the tea-table, until Cammy and Vinny withdrew into a corner to compare notes in no very mournful mood. Then, Lord Walter again devoted himself exclusively to

his aunt, until, at half-past ten, the clock gave the signal for the invalid to retire, vouchsafing to all a most cordial good-night.

No sooner had the door closed upon her, than Lord Walter and Lady Cammy sprang up, and proceeded to make amends for any past constraint by executing together a dance of the most primitive description. I thought that Lavinia would positively have expired with laughter during this exhibition, which was not concluded until both performers seemed ready to drop from exhaustion. The breathless Lady Camilla then drew near me, and gasped forth :—

“ What do you think of that, Mr. Calcraft? That’s the way the New Zealanders express their gratitude, when relieved from anything unpleasant.”

“ I thought it was the Huwons,” interposed her partner.

“ The dance is agreeably borrowed from both, I dare say. And how do you find yourself, Mr. Calcraft? Pierced through and

through again, eh, by arrows from the soft damsel's eye? Vinny didn't do it so badly, did she now?"

"She showed herself, indeed, a most consummate deceiver."

"Ah! ah! rather severe, that; but never mind. Mustn't we all be deceivers now and then in self-defence? Who would take care of us, I should like to know, if we did not take care of ourselves a little bit. But I'll have charge of you next, and establish a counterpoise—dying for the charming Vinny to-night; expiring for the lovely Cammy tomorrow; what existence could be more enchanting? And how do you find yourself, Master Walter?"

"Weasonably convalescent, thank you, weasonably convalescent, though still wather out of bweath."

"Everything went off uncommon, didn't it?"

"To a degwee."

"I have not seen her in such good humour for the last fifty years."

"Ah ! ah ! ah ! vewy good, Cammy, nor I neither. She seemed pleased with eweweone, and was quite gwacious to me at last."

"Indeed. What did she say ?"

"She touched me with her fan, and vowed it was impossible to be angwy with such a widiculous ape. I call that flattewing and gwatifying, don't you, Cammy ?"

"Of course, I do. Ah ! ah ! ah ! and Vinny too."

Miss Dieaway looked somewhat grave, but expressed no dissent.

"It certainly did go off remarkably well," resumed Lady Cammy, "as I was sure it would, if we took it well in hand. I begin to hope that it will all come round before long, Walter."

"I am thowoughly convinced of it, Cammy; but," continued he, as if suddenly recollecting himself, "what I have gone thwoigh all the evening, thus sepawated from Vinny, baffles all descwiptiion."

"Well, that's pretty complimentawy to me, anyhow."

"I can't help it, old fellow—I can't help it. The correct and genuine expression of my feelings has outworn my discretion. I am in such a transport of joy, that I am no longer responsible for my actions."

"So it appears, indeed," said Miss Vinny, reining up rather fiercely at his too near approach; notwithstanding which, Lady Camilla closed in likewise to the rescue.

"Now then—now then, don't forget yourself, if you please. A little good fellowship, just for to-night, is all very well, and will help the serving out of Mr. Calcraft; but that's no reason for breaking out in this extraordinary fashion. Stand back, I say, or Vinny and I will run up to bed at once, as it is full time we should."

"But you were saying just now, Cammy, that the principal obstacles had been removed."

"No, I wasn't; all I said was, that I thought matters were looking up a little. Upon which, I think, Vinny, we had better wish them both a very good night."

The joyous retreat of the two fair cousins was not much longer delayed, after which I was favoured with a short *exposé* of his lordship's particular views respecting the present posture of his affairs.

"It is pefectly twue, Calcwaft," said he, reclining in one arm-chair, with his feet elevated far above the general level, on the back of another. "It is perfectly twue that our pwospects are bwightening up."

"I am very happy that you should have the satisfaction of thinking so."

"But don't you aggree with me, old man? I speak to you as being my fwieand."

"You can have no reason, I trust, for considering me in any other light."

"No, indeed, Calcwaft, and all that chaff respecting your being a twaitor in the camp, pwoceeds only fwom the exubewance of our spiwits. I say our pwospects are looking up, and I think that I am wight, for Lady E.'s wesistance is our pwincipal obstacle, and certainly I never saw her so gwacious to me as to-night."

"But don't you fear, Lord Walter, there may be some misunderstanding at the bottom of all this?"

"Vewy pwobably, Calcwaft, vewy pwo-bably," replied his lordship. "But still it is a gweat matter to have bwought things into a smoother twain. I couldn't exactly tell you the weason, but yet I feel thowoughly confident that the pwospects are cleawing up. And, after all, isn't it natuwal that they should? I am not wemawkably hideous. Vinny has been expiwing for sevewal months, and we shall have plenty of money between us, besides having a footing at my governor's house, at Dweadnought, and here, so as to believe the housekeeping when necessawy. I am not one of those, you see, who are for cawwyng domestic seclusion too far. I wish to be pwetty fwee as to my actions. But, upon the whole, I am sure that Vinny will be extwemely happy with me."

"She deserves to be so, whatever may be her lot," was my simple reply.

"She does; and the hope that we shall both be so, each in our peculiar way, has alone sustained me through all the trials we have had to go through. But the worst is now over, Calcwaft, the worst is now over, I trust, and I see no wock ahead but the chewoot question."

"What on earth may that be?"

"The smoking, you know. Cammy is persuaded that I mean to relinquish the evil practice, but not a bit of it. It may be true that the fwagwant smell disagrees flichtfully with Vinny; but it would disagree considerably with me to give it up, and I must pwerserve my health and spiits for the good of both. After all, girls are vewy like fillies,—they require a little bweaking in—and I shall vewyreadily bweak Vinny in to this and sundwy other peculiawities."

With these triumphant anticipations, his lordship retired to his rest, how soon to learn the truth of the great French orator's saying, that the Tarpeian Rock is ever the nearest neighbour to the Capitol.

CHAPTER VI.

I HAVE already said that my two fair visitors had made it a regular point of late to join me at breakfast together. I was, therefore, rather surprised, on the following morning, while casting my preliminary glance at the newspaper, with my back to the door, to hear but one gentle footstep behind me.

“ How are you this morning, Sir Charles ? ” said a soft voice, imitating in vain the still softer one. “ Ah ! ah ! ah !—it won’t do, I see ; but you needn’t be alarmed. She is very well, though she is not coming.”

“ Nothing has gone wrong, I hope, Lady Camilla ? ”

"Nothing at all—far from it. The fact is, that we hardly closed our eyes all night with talking over what Walter calls 'the prospects,' and that having got her fast asleep, at last, I have left her so, looking like the loveliest child you ever saw, with her long eyelashes half way down her cheek."

"I am glad it is nothing worse," observed I. "Hope is as great a blessing as sleep."

"Well, we had plenty of that last night, at all events. When it was to be, how it was to come off, where they were to live, and Heaven knows what besides. One thing puzzled her a little, to be sure, which was to make out whether Walter would ever be quite steady and sensible enough to advise and direct her; for we want somebody amazingly grave and sober, and whom we can look up to and respect. But as I have had no sleep, I must have a little food, or I shall expire. Ah! strawberries at last—that's all right. Wonderful how fond gardeners are of rearing them with the greatest possible care, and then leaving them for the

little birds. Give me plenty of them and lots of cream. Hallo ! a letter for me, seal uppermost—it looks for all the world as if they had been tossing heads or tails with it, and heads had turned up. Queer seal enough, by the way—What on earth is it ? A knife and handle, with the motto :—“ We two are one.” I wonder which I am—the blade I hope—and who the other party can be ? Here’s for it. Hem. ‘ My very dear love.’ Well, upon my word, that’s warmish !”

Thus far my fair companion had preserved, without an effort, the full and joyous recklessness of her usual tone and deportment ; but a very visible change became immediately manifest here. The radiant smile vanished at once; the soft cheek grew very pale and then was deeply flushed ; astonishment, dismay, resentment fleeted in quick succession across her expressive countenance, until at length a frown of the fiercest indignation contracted for a time her haughty brow. So clearly apparent was her emotion, that I could not but exclaim :

"No bad news, Lady Camilla, I trust?"

"No, not exactly; and yet it is, of course," replied she. And examining, for the first time, the envelope and address of the letter, she added, as if thinking aloud rather than answering me.—"To be sure. I might have guessed as much."

For a few minutes, she sat opposite to me, at the breakfast-table, in a fit of such moody abstraction, and still spelling, as it were, every syllable of the mysterious letter, that I ventured at last to say:

"Dear Lady Camilla, you are forgetting your strawberries."

"Strawberries!" said she, contemptuously; "proper time this for eating strawberries!"

"I thought you liked them at breakfast."

"I have had breakfast enough and to spare here, thank you."

"Well, but pray be more composed," said I, soothingly. "Far be it from me to enquire into any of your secrets—"

"My secrets!" interjected she, imperiously.

“ Do you imagine that there are any secrets of mine in that villainous rag of paper ?”

“ Then why should it prevent your eating your breakfast ?”

“ Because it does, that’s all. Perhaps I may as well show it to you.—But, wait a minute, I had better think it over a little.”

Another short interval of silence occurred, after which she suddenly exclaimed :

“ Do you see that knife ?”

“ I do.”

“ If it were six inches longer, do you know what I should like to do with it ?”

“ No.”

“ To run it through and through you between five and six hundred times.”

“ Dear me, Lady Camilla ! that would be excessively unpleasant for one of the parties engaged. What can I have done to deserve such a fate at your hands ?”

“ In the first place, because you are one of the set.”

“ What set, Lady Camilla ?”

“Those odious, deceitful, traitorous, treacherous men.”

“I must plead guilty on that count. And what is my next offence?”

“That, after all, I believe you have been quite right and we quite wrong. There, read that horror.”

I took the proffered letter, and, according to an inveterate habit of mine, glanced first at the signature.

“Selina Brown!” said I; “who can Selina Brown be?”

“Come, come, you know very well or can very well guess,” was the terse reply.

“Indeed, Lady Camilla, I can divine nothing further than that she is a friend and correspondent of yours.”

“A friend and correspondent of mine! I thank you very much for the compliment. Perhaps you had better be sure first that the letter is really addressed to me, as I thought it was, of course, when I opened it.”

Thus admonished, I, in my turn, examined

the envelope, and was much concerned to find that it bore the address of Lord Walter Dieaway.

"Dear me!" exclaimed I, "how very unpleasant. Redhill should really be more careful in placing the letters."

"Perhaps he should; but this seems quite providential."

"Indeed? and yet I feel scarcely justified in reading the letter."

"Well, don't—that's all. You looked as if you wished to, and that's why I gave it to you."

"I had no conception, then, Lady Camilla, that it was not addressed to you. But, at all events, pray tell me who Mrs.—Miss—or Lady—what is it?—Selina Brown, may be."

"No, I shan't. If I know even her odious name, it is more than I ought to. But one can't always help hearing Dauntless, Walter, and the rest of them talking all sorts of nonsense, besides seeing the horrible wretch at the opera, or riding about the park."

"I think I understand you now, Lady

Camilla, and am truly sorry that, under present circumstances, particularly, Lord Walter should be in correspondence with such a personage."

"The correspondence itself is bad enough of course, but if you saw what's in the letter, even you would start back, I think."

"Indeed ! what can it contain ?"

"What can it contain ? That's rather good. You wouldn't read the letter for the world—oh ! dear no—much too discreet for that—but you wouldn't object to my imparting to you all that's in it. Now, I will tell you what it is, Mr. Calcraft. We Darealls are, or, at all events, we consider ourselves, every bit as scrupulous in matters of honour and delicacy as any of our neighbours ; yet our nerves are not so extremely sensitive but that we would pull back a friend from the brink of a precipice at the risk of tumbling her gown. If any body had told me, an hour ago, that I should ever open and read other people's letters without their permission, I should just

have taken the liberty of slapping his face. But now, having done it without the slightest intention, as you must have observed, and having thus learned what most intimately concerns the happiness of my best friend, I shall certainly make such use of the information as reason and affection may prompt. I don't know if you will think me justified in this course, and, what's more, I don't care. I always do what I consider to be my duty without looking to the right or to the left."

"For which I should conceive, Lady Camilla, that everyone must admire you."

"I don't require the admiration of everyone or of anyone; but as you are a particularly shrewd, sensible man, having some experience of the world, I should have liked to know how far your opinion upon the bearings of that letter agreed with mine."

"Well, Lady Camilla," said I, though very doubtfully, "if, under such peculiar circumstances, you really deem —"

"No, no, not a bit of it," replied she, has-

tily : “ far be it from me to overrule your scruples—and, after all, it is as clear as daylight. Every line, every word teems with the most deliberate and premeditated betrayal of that poor little Vinny’s faith and trust.”

I could not but hazard here the observation that, after all, the letter was not from Lord Walter himself, and, therefore, could scarcely be held to state or to represent his feelings.

“ You wouldn’t think that long, if you saw the letter,” was the reply. “ It is an answer to one from him, the purport of which is apparent throughout. I suppose this is pretty clear,” continued she, referring to the unfortunate missive :—

“ ‘ I am quite willing to believe you, when you vow and protest that this blessed marriage is to make no sort of difference in your feelings or in our intercourse ; that you do not for an instant compare your stupid little marlin-spike of cousin to a woman like me, &c.’

“ And, again, here :—

“ ‘ I can easily settle about our being in the

same street, when I know where you mean to hang out ; and if you send me the said little cheque in due time — ’

“ That will do, and to spare,” concluded the ardent Lady Camilla, throwing down the letter and stamping upon it. . “ How I do wish that villain would come down ; I shall not be able to keep all this bottled up much longer.”

“ May I entreat of you, Lady Camilla, that you will not allow any hastier feeling to prevail over your sober judgment in this most serious emergency. If you are cautious and prudent, you have now undoubtedly the means of averting a great and irreparable evil ; but—”

I would have ventured a little more in the same strain, had not the door at this very moment opened, and Lord Walter made his expected appearance. With his habitual self-complacency, his Lordship winked his matutinal greeting to his cousin, and to myself, after which, he exclaimed :

"Stwawbewwies, I vow and pwotest, weal, live stwawbewwies. Don't be awfaid of eating them, Cammy. Old Wedhill has pwomised me always to keep back a weserve for me."

No answer was vouchsafed to this remark, but the ominous silence seemed all unheeded, his lordship's whole attention being concentrated upon the strawberries.

"Vinny not down yet—nothing wong, I hope?" was his next observation.

No answer again from the fair party addressed.

I was upon tenter-hooks. I have always devoutly hated what is called, familiarly, a scene and every portion of it, but nothing so much as the period of breathless suspense which precedes it. It was, therefore, quite a relief to me to answer, in Lady Camilla's stead, that Miss Dieaway was not ill, but only rather late.

"Pewhaps the heat has oppwessed her a little," continued Lord Walter: "it was vewy gweat in the night. As to Cammy, she is as

wed as one as these wespectable bewwies—quite cwimson."

And so she was ; for if ever human resentment burned, it did then, in no figurative strain, upon the high-spirited maiden's cheek.

The storm-cloud burst here.

"Walter, do you know that handwriting?" was the fierce inquiry.

Her cousin glanced at the proffered letter, smoothed his shirt-collars with the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, and replied, with the extremest composure—

"I wather think I do. Ah! ah! ah! You don't mean to say that she has actually written to you?"

"No ; it has not quite come to that yet : but she has written to you, and ——"

"And you have opened the letter? Ah! ah! ah! —that's toleably cool. What fellows those young girls are, to be sure, at wouting and wummaging other people's things."

"If I opened it, of course, it was by accident, which you might know without my telling you."

"It's a descwiption of accident, Cammy, which you should twy and pwevent for the future. Young men may have secwets which it would not be quite disabweet for young unmawwied women to pwy into."

"I was pretty well aware of that before you took the trouble of telling me; but having, I repeat, by the merest accident, learned the tale which that letter reveals, I wish you to know at once that I do not mean to sit still—that's all."

"But what stowy is it that she has gone and told you?"

"The story of such base, heartless, determined treachery as I could hardly have believed it possible for the human mind to conceive."

"My gwacious, Cammy! how howwible! And who is the perpetwator?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Walter; you ought to know enough of me by this time to be aware that it is scarcely safe to trifle with me when my blood is up. I have this day dis-

covered—Heaven knows how undesignedly—upon what an unworthy object my best friend was placing her affections. How I am ever to forgive myself for my share in the past, is a matter between me and my rest ; but as, happily, it is not yet too late, I give you here fair warning, that I shall not leave a stone unturned to prevent my precious Vinny from being so cruelly sacrificed."

"Ah ! ah ! ah ! sacwifized is wather good in the pwesent instance," replied the totally unmoved Lord Walter ; "sacwifized is wich ! Just wead me the letter, there's a good fellow, while I am pwepawing my stwaw-bewwies."

"Read it yourself," replied his cousin, throwing it towards him with a look of still increasing horror.

His lordship cast his eyes over it listlessly, seemed rather diverted than otherwise with its contents, and, when he had concluded, merely observed :

"There's nothing so vewy dweadful in it after all."

"Very well," said Lady Camilla; "we will see what Vinny thinks of it—that's all."

"I don't see the gweat use of talking to Vinny about it," observed her cousin, if possible, more apathetically than before.

"If you don't, I do—that's the difference."

"It stwikes me that there are a gweat many things in this world which Vinny don't know and had better not learn."

"Amongst others, I suppose, that she is to be betrayed even before she is married."

"I don't see any betwayal in the matter. I am not dweaming of mawwyng anybody but Vinny, and certainly not Selina Bwown."

"It is a great pity you don't: you would be very well matched."

"Ah! ah! ah! vewy good. Cammy would fetch money at a fair, wouldn't she, Calcwaft, when she is in a wage? But, sewiously speaking, that sort of mawwiage seldom turns out well."

"Rather better, I should say, than that we were preparing for poor Vinny."

"It is for Vinny to determine what her prospects of happiness with me are. We have always said all through, you know, Cammy, that she was old enough to judge for herself."

"So she will, I make no doubt, when she learns the treachery that was in store for her."

"I repeat it, there is no treachery in the matter—at all events, towards Vinny. I knew Selina Brown before I had ever seen or laid eyes on Vinny, and if anyone has a right to complain, it is she. I don't like to say much about myself, but the fact is, that what takes Vinny in my appearance, and so forth, may take other women. It really isn't my fault, and I don't know how to prevent it. I will take this very case of Selina Brown, for instance, and Caldwaff, who is cool and rational, shall be our referee. I was riding, one summer's evening, in the carriage drive by the Serpentine, with your own brother Dauntless —"

"Dauntless! nonsense! I know he is no

saint, but he don't pretend to be in love with his cousins, and going to marry them."

"I am not going to say anything in dis-pawagement of Dauntless, mind you. Dauntless is a vewy excellent fellow, and one of my best fwiends; but I was widing with him, when we met a bwougham, in which there was a vewy pwetty woman, which Selina Bwown certainly is. Why, you have seen her twenty times, at least, Cammy. I wemember as well as possible your asking Dauntless who she was, one evening at the opewa, and the wascal's answering that he weally didn't know, but he thought her name was Bwown—ah ! ah ! ah ! Well, the evening that I was widing with him—and a lovely evening it was too, with a wefweshing bweeze ——"

"Are these details quite requisite, Lord Walter?" I could not but observe; "you should remember that we are not alone."

"Quite wequisite, my good fwiend—quite wequisite. Don't be awfaid. I shall not forget the pwesence of this delicate cweature;

but, as she chooses to wead my letters, she must learn cowwectly to understand what is in them. About a week after what I have alweady mentioned, as I was widing alone on the gwass by Wotten Wow, up scampers a girl upon a vewy fine horse, and drops her little widing-whip. I made no particular huwwy, as her gwoom was behind her; but she waited till I had dwawn near, and then wequested me to pick it up for her. I could not wefuse, as a lady was concerned; and, when I handed it to her, she seemed in gweat twibulation, as her horse had stamped upon the ivowy handle, and cwushed it, and knocked out some pwecious stones, as she said, that were wound the top of it. I wemarked that I thought it could be mended; she said she didn't think it could in London, as it came fwom Pawis. I said I'd twy; she said I might; but only to let her have it, if they made a good job of it; and that it would look much better if the wubies were bigger. Well, when I had got——"

"I haven't constitution to stand all this," here gasped Lady Camilla, springing up at the same time. "You can go on with your infamous stories to Sir Charles, if he can bear with such detestable nonsense. As to me, I am off to Vinny, to see what she'll think of the letter, which I don't mean to lose sight of," added she, snatching it up and depositing it in a most inexpugnable sanctuary.

"I say, Cammy," objected her cousin, but still, without betraying the slightest emotion, "don't be in such a twemendous huwwy, old fellow, or pewhaps you will be sowwy for it afterwards. It is a question whether you have any wight at all to make use of a letter, which was not addwessed to you—"

"If it is a question, I have answered it before," was the curt reply.

"Vewy well; but if you do make use of it, you should understand its twue beawings. My object is to weconcile all pawties to my mawwiage, and to pwevent anything's occuw-

wing, which could distwess my tweasure Vinny's feelings. Now, Selina Bwown is a despewate tartar, and I shall deserve some cwedit if I can pull thwough without a wow and a wumpus. These, she would gwatify us with, at once, if I were to bweak with her washly and inconsidewately. On the contwawy, all will come wight enough with a little time, a little man-agement, and a little appwopwiate phwase-ology."

"I suppose it is under this heading that are to come in the unalterable feelings of devotion."

"All these feelings are unalterable always, Cammy, you know vewy well, and they wemain so until they do alter. She's not so gween as you, Selina Bwown."

"And the promise to live in the same street."

"Pwomises and pie-cwusts are made to be bwoken."

"And marriage vows too, it would seem.

Besides, the insulting comparison between such a creature as that and dear Vinny ——”

“ The compawison, Cammy, is not of my making. Selina Bwown is a vewy fine young woman, who knows that vewy well herself, and I weally cannot be wesponsible for what she wites, whether it be positive or compawa-tive.”

“ You shall be, though, when it is clearly and evidently the exact paraphrase of what you wrote yourself.”

“ I don’t see the slightest pwoof of that.”

“ I do then.”

“ Because,” proceeded his lordship, begin-ning to discuss a most compendious mixture of strawberries and cream, which he had been preparing throughout, apparently with unmoved and undivided solicitude; “ because you see, old fellow, you have chosen to fly into one of your wages. If you made it a wule to take things coolly as I do, quite fwigidly, like the dwy champagne, you would not so often be betwayed into hasty and incowvect

appweiations. What can be cleaver than that my unaltevable feelings for Selina Bwown, and the pwomise of ever living in the same stweet with her, are two egwegious plants—wregular gewaniums. As to any weflections upon Vinny's figure, I appeal to Calcwaft whether there is the slightest pwoof ——”

“ Pray don't appeal to me, Lord Walter, “ I wish to remain perfectly neutral.”

“ Well, I don't, that's the difference,” cried Lady Camilla, fiercely. “ I am willing to make every fair allowance for a great many things I don't know, and don't wish to know ; but, whatever may be my failings, I am honest and true—at least, I trust so. Deceit, treachery and false-heartedness I hate, loathe and abhor. Others may sit still in their presence ; I cannot, and would not, if I could. They seem to contaminate the pure air of Heaven ; when they are near me, I can no longer breathe. There hasn't been a single word or look of yours, Walter, since I showed you that villainous letter, which has not aggra-

vated, a hundred-fold, its horror in my eyes. Thank God, my duty in the matter is clear to me as day-light, and you may rely upon my thoroughly performing it."

"Wemember any how, Cammy, that there is no pwoof."

But his lordship's renewed objection was not heeded, if it were heard at all, his head-strong cousin having rushed from her untasted breakfast, to the accomplishment of her self-imposed task. Her departure, however, induced no disquietude on the part of my companion. He finished his strawberries with the most unruffled composure, and then, but then only, observed, rather dogmatically—

"It's a stwange thing, Calcwaft, how nothing in this world will wun quite smooth. Here are the stwawbewwies at last, and vewy good they are; but on the pwecise day of their first appeawance at bweakfast, up tuwns with them this unpwpitious occuwwence. How came old Wedhill to put Selina Bwown's letter before Cammy?"

"I have no conception, Lord Walter."

"Well, well, what can't be cuwed, must be enduwed."

"You have certainly acted admirably up to the precept," I could not but remark.

"My good fwieand," replied he, "fwom the first moment I saw that there was no wemedy, and where I see no wemedy, I always avoid distwessing myself. Without wegular violence, I could never have weseted the letter fwom Cammy; and even if I had wecovewed it, I could not have pwevented her being in posession of its contents. I also well knew that, headstwong as she is, no one could pwevail upon her to keep her own counsel; I wesolved, therefore, at once to put the best face I could upon the twansaction, wesewving to myself the wight of bwing Vinny wound again when the wout with Cammy will be over."

"I see."

"Pewhaps, after all, Calcwaft, it is as well that Vinny should learn that, though I never

put myself out of my way for any living creature, other girls than she may have—eh, hum—the outwageous bad taste to take a fancy to me! and, when such misfortunes occur, what are we to do but to have wecourse to some honouwable compwomise? Vinny's feelings, of course, must be the pwime object, but some wegard must also be shown for other bweaking hearts."

"It would scarcely be considerate otherwise," observed I, for want of something better to say.

"Pwecisely, and Vinny will be bwought to compwehend this, just as she will get weconciled to the chewoots, after a little gentle pwessure. Now, having finished my bweakfast—and a vewy good one, too!—I think that I will stwoll leisuwely down, and wefwesh myself with a weed, in the diwection of the summer-house. Cammy shall have a fair field and a pwodigious start; but I shall be vewy much surpwised, if when I step in at last, I don't win the wace at a modewate canter."

I felt no inclination to trespass any further upon Lord Walter's satisfactory anticipations ; and, when I retired to my study, I found that the morning's incidents had furnished me also with ample matter for reflection.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR far more than half an hour I sat, in utter solitude, speculating upon the probable consequences of the strange and most unforeseen occurrence which threatened, or rather promised, to change the whole anticipated course of events in the little world around me. I was still thus engaged, or disengaged, when, from my open window, which commanded a fair view of the main walk down to the garden, I discerned Cammy and Vinny slowly gliding down it from the house. As far as I could distinguish, the bearing of either showed in complete accordance with the feelings likely to predominate in each fair bosom. While Lady

Camilla's gait was firm and resolute as ever—while her arm encircled, and almost seemed to uphold, her drooping companion—Miss Die-away's whole attitude bespoke the utter prostration of her spirit. Frequently was her handkerchief pressed to her eyes; and, more than once, ere I lost sight of her, was she constrained to pause and relieve her breaking heart in the fostering embrace of her cousin. I watched them with indescribable interest, until a protruding edge of the shrubbery concealed from me their further progress; but, before many minutes had elapsed, I was surprised to see them retracing their homeward way with far more hurried steps. Nor was I long at a loss to ascertain the cause of the precipitate return; for the figure of Lord Walter was soon disclosed in calm but deliberate pursuit. It was clear, from Lady Camilla's repeated gestures, as well as from the fervour with which Lavinia's face was now buried in her handkerchief, that his lordship's attentions were anything but welcome. They were,

however, none the less sedulously urged, until the little party having come to a halt within hearing distance of my secluded post, I was enabled to gather certain passing snatches of the conversation.

"I don't want to be intwusive, far fwom it," said Lord Walter; "but Vinny must weally compwehend that I can't be wesponsible for Miss Bwown's witings."

"Vinny agrees with me, heart and soul, about the whole transaction, I tell you," was the inflexible reply.

"But there is not the slightest pwoof."

"She thinks there is every possible proof in the world."

"She won't think that, when I have had an opportunity of wepwesenting to her cow-wectly—"

"She never means to speak to you again—to look at you again—or to have anything to do with you."

"But that is most pwepostewous."

"So it may be, yet she will adhere to it, you may take my word for that."

" It would be most unnecessawy and twoublesome to wite."

" Ah ! ah ! write ? I advise you to. As soon as she would be within a hundred yards of your letter, she would trample upon it—tear it into little bits, and throw each of them into the fire. Am not I expressing your true feelings, darling ?"

" Ye—es," was the sobbing reply.

" Accurately, though very feebly."

A similar assent was again obtained.

" Then, look here, Walter," cried his impetuous cousin, " there is not the slightest use in pestering and persecuting us. You are only making yourself, if possible, more thoroughly odious and contemptible !"

" But after all where is the pwoof?"

The conversation was here brought to a sudden close, by the abrupt retirement of the two fair cousins into the house.

At luncheon, Miss Dieaway did not make her appearance, and Lady Cammy showed herself more indignant and implacable than

before ; but nothing in Lord Walter's countenance or manner betrayed the slightest concern. Having two or three times failed to obtain an answer of any kind to some cursory observations addressed to his cousin, he entered with me into an elaborate description of the merits and defects of his horses, as freely and as calmly as if nothing had occurred since the previous evening. In the meantime, his cousin ate very little—spoke still less, and, so soon as she perceived that I had finished my own scanty luncheon, she said hastily—

“Sir Charles, may I say a few words to you in private?”

“Lady Camilla, I am quite at your orders.”

“It is so fine, and my poor head is burning so ! Will you walk down with me towards the garden ?”

“I shall be too happy.”

“I have a gweat good mind to take a stwoll in the same diwection, Cammy,” said his lordship, with still increased composure.

“If you go, we won't, that's all.”

" Why ? "

" Because I wish to speak to Sir Charles alone."

" But we are fwee born Bwitons, and at liberty to wove and to woam in ewwy diwec-tion, so that we commit no outwage."

" I don't see what greater outrage you could commit, than to intrude and trespass upon us now; but we can lock ourselves up in Sir Charles's study if requisite."

" Well, it won't be wequisite, Cammy. I was only pwoposing myself, but wouldn't wish to be considewed intwusive. While you and Calcwaft are pwoceeding towards the garden, I can knock up Vinny, and twy the effect of a little watational conversation upon her."

" Do, by all means. You will find her locked up with Lady Edward; but I dare say you will not mind slipping in by the window, through one of the panes."

" Well, I think I would wather not twy, the opewation being decidedly pwecawious. It will all keep vewy well until this evening or

to-mowwow, and I can have the dwag turned out, and well dusted and aiwed."

Lady Camilla's straw hat being always in the hall, we were soon on our way together to the garden.

"Sir Charles," began she at once, "I require your assistance in a little matter."

"I shall be too proud to afford it."

"You must persuade Walter to leave us immediately—to-morrow at latest."

"I will do my best, Lady Camilla; but you know as well as I do what are my prospects of success."

"You must do your best, and we will join you, heart and soul—that's all I see for it. Vinny is determined never to speak to him again—I am resolved she shall not. We are all right once more with Lady E., and if we can but get rid of this odious creature, we shall do very well for a few days, until we fix upon the next move."

"I can quite understand your anxiety upon this head," observed I, "but I am at the

greatest loss to conceive how I can best carry out your wishes."

"Simply by telling Walter that you will not hear of his staying another day under your roof."

"I fear that I cannot express myself more distinctly upon this head than I did upon a former occasion, and you may remember how ineffectually."

"Ah! I was aiding and abetting him then, as I shall you, now. You must do your best, as master of the house, and leave the rest to me; for, though nothing could exceed the spirit shown by Vinny, of course it is most irksome to her, being exposed to meet Walter at every turn."

"He seemed thoroughly convinced," observed I, parenthetically, "that a very few words on his part would suffice to restore him to his cousin's good graces."

"I feel no sort of apprehension on that head. Happily, Vinny has shown herself much more offended and hurt than grieved at the disclo-

sure, and I could keep her well up to the mark if I were wanted, which I know I shall not be. Still, for all that, he might give us a good deal of annoyance, and I want him away more than words can tell."

"Lady Edward, I suppose, has displayed no great regret at the occurrence?"

"None, indeed; I even think it has cured her outright. Upon the whole, though, she has been more sensible and prudent than I expected. Instead of cocking and crowing over Vinny and me, as I thought she would, she merely observed that if, unfortunately for us, we had had her experience of the world, we should never have been so much deceived, or so much surprised. But you will speak to Walter seriously, will not you?"

"I certainly will."

"Our first object is to get rid of him; we must afterwards think over what will best recruit our poor little Vinny's spirits. I'm all for a month or so in London. Lady E. seems to agree with me now; but, of course, there is no mentioning this to Vinny just yet."

“Don’t you rather think, Lady Camilla, that the quiet and retirement of the country would, under present circumstances, be preferable to the turmoil and fatigue of London?”

“No, I don’t, indeed, Mr. Calcraft,” was the deliberate reply. “Change of air and scene and life, are my specifics for this kind of indisposition. But you need not look so very blank; we shall not hurry away for a few days yet. Who is that down there at the end of the walk—not Walter, is it?”

“It is very like him, Lady Camilla.”

“I suppose he will try and break in upon us, after all; but I shall be up to him yet. So soon as he comes near us, I will slip away, and leave you to settle with him all about his departure.”

“But will you not, Lady Camilla, afford me your countenance and support?”

“Certainly not at present. It will be full time for me to interfere later, if my services are required.”

Lord Walter was now approaching us with the air of one who had dexterously accomplished his purpose ; but no sooner was he close at hand, than Lady Camilla, with a farewell gesture to me, turned suddenly round and hastily retreated in the direction of the house.

"Westive still," remarked her unmoved cousin ; "I thought that by going smartly wound, I could have cwept in upon you ; but she was too weady for me this time. I have a gweat mind to wun after her, but weally the heat is so oppwessive ! "

"I have besides," interposed I, "a few words to say to you, Lord Walter."

"To me? vewy good, my worthy fwield. You may wely upon an attentive heawing.'

"The subject is most unpleasant, I can assure you, Lord Walter."

"Take it coolly, Calcwaft ; take it fwigidly, like the dwy champagne."

"I have to request you, Lord Walter," continued I, "both on my own part, and on the

part of others, to leave Rockingham Hall as soon as convenient to yourself, say to-morrow."

"Impossible, my good fwieand, impossible. To say nothing of the stwawbewwies, I am here, you will wemember, in charge of Cammy and you weally must not consider me intwusive if, so long as she wemains, I wemain."

"But it is precisely she, Lord Walter, who most desires that you should comply with my request."

"Ah! ah! ah!" was the languid reply. "She says so to day, Calcwaft, because she chooses to be in a wage with me about that letter from Selina Bwown; but it will come wight again sooner than you suppose, and I cannot dweam of leaving you tall under pwe- sent circumstances."

"But if, unfortunately, those circumstances are such, Lord Walter, as to compel us all to desire—must I say to require, that you should leave us?"

"Well, you must weply, as I have done before now, you will wecollect, that, quite

independently of the stwawbewwies and of this last bweeze, as I am in charge of Cammy, I must wemain on here so long as Cammy herself wemains."

"Must I remind you, my dear Lord Walter, that, when the master of the house and all whom it contains are driven to request and to demand the departure of one of the guests, his prolonged stay would be the height of indiscretion."

"Discwetion, my good fwieand, is an excellent thing," was the didactic response. "I admire discwetion very much, indeed. I could not too sewiously impwess upon you its mewits and its wequimentes; but there are other duties, Calcwtaft, besides those of discwetion. It is quite a question whether, if we had had wegard to the dictates of discwetion, Cammy and I would have owiginally twespassed upon you at all, or whether we should have wemainded on so long, contwawy to your wepeated wequests. Our weasons for doing so, you can well wemember. We wegarded them as su-

pewior to the wequiment of discwetion ;
and we wuled our conduct accordingly then,
just as I shall be constwained to wule mine
now."

Former experience had well taught me how very slight was my prospect of success in my present endeavour. I had, therefore, entered upon it with no other expectation than that of honestly redeeming my promise to Lady Camilla. As, however, any conditional pledge of his lordship's departure was preferable to his absolute refusal, I thought it as well to bind him down, if possible, to some understanding of the kind, and I accordingly said—

" You are determined, I see, Lord Walter, to remain faithful, at all hazards, to Lady Dreadnought's charge ? "

" Pwecisely. I consider that duty as pawa-mount at pwesent. You know, Calcwaft, eweypything in this world is welative. It is quite wight to tell the twuth, and it would be quite wong to pwoclaim a state secwet. It would be quite wong to commit murder at

home, and it would be quite wight to destwoy a hundwed thousand Wussians in the Cwimea. Thus, it is quite wight in genewal to be dis-
cweet; but it would be ewwy wong, in my case, to betway a solemn twust."

"At all events, you will recollect," added I, in conclusion, "how strenuously I have urged you to meet our wishes."

"My dear fellow," replied his lordship, "nothing could have been more thowoughly well put or appwopwiate, than ewwy word and expwession that you have used. You might talk on till doomsday, but you could not impwove your case, or pwoduce more impwession upon me. I am acting by you, as I should wequest you to act by me, were the case wevewsed, and, when you come to think it over, I am sure that you will feel gwateful to me for the confidence which my fwriendly treatment of you weveals."

Upon these terms, I parted with my imperturbable visitor, ere my assumed gravity had given way to the irresistibly comical effect

of his tone and arguments. I had not been very long again in my study when, heralded by a gentle rap at my door, Lady Camilla joined me.

"I heard that you were come in," exclaimed she, hastily. "and was anxious to know the result of your conversation."

"Very much what we both might have expected, Lady Camilla. Lord Walter positively declines to leave us."

"You made it clear to him how strongly I and every one else here require it?"

"I did, Lady Camilla."

"And what on earth did he reply to that?"

"He was at a loss neither for arguments nor for precedents."

"I see," said my fair visitor, not without a slight blush; "but the case is now diametrically reversed."

"He still considers himself bound not to relinquish his charge of you."

"Ridiculous, as if I or any body else wanted him! I suppose that I had better

give him a piece of my mind, and see what that will do."

"It would be very advisable I think, Lady Camilla."

"You won't mind me seeing him here, will you?"

"No; that is if you prefer it."

"I do very much; I don't wish to be alone with the monster to day if I can possibly help it, and besides, you can back me up a little, Ring, and send for him, there's a good man. I am sure that he is pottering about as usual, somewhere near the stables. And mind you, if I break out overmuch, just give me a wink, and I'll try and restrain myself. There, go on with your newspaper, and don't think of me; the less I talk and excite myself before hand, the cooler I shall be."

Within a very few minnutes, the familiar expression :

"Hallo there, you cwipples," uttered at my window, warned me that my message had been delivered and responded to. "You want me,

Calcwaft, I am told ?" proceeded his lordship.

" No, Lord Walter ; but a young lady here wishes to speak to you."

" All wight and tight," continued he, clambering in through the open casement. " I am always weady for this descwiptiion of confewence. Hallo, Cammy, I say, what a fellow you are ! I thought it was Vinny."

" Vinny, indeed ! You may wait sometime before she opens her lips to you again, or allows you to come within sight of her."

" I gwieve to thing of it, Cammy, I gwieve to think of it. Not on my own account, mind you. My pwinciple is invawiable : I wegard this life as a bottle of dwy champagne, which should always be taken coolly and fwigidly. But others are not so wational, and it is a gweat pity that she should bweak her little tweasure of a heart when, with a vewy few words, I could set all wight."

" If you think that she is breaking her heart, you are very much mistaken : I never saw her better, or more cheerful, in my life."

"Ah! ah! ah! that's toleably wich; as if she hadn't nearly dwowned herself with cwying all the morning!"

"She is not crying now, I can tell you, though the thoughts of her past folly may have drawn a few tears from her at first; but that is nothing to our purpose. You know what we expect of you?"

"Not pwecisely."

"That you should not heap fresh insult upon us all by remaining on here. When will you go?"

"It would be indisweet on my part to name any day. I am not a fwee agent."

"How not a free agent?"

"Because I weceived Lady Dweadnought's commands to wemain with you until we weturned, and I faithfully pwomised that I would."

"Nonsense."

"It's pewfactly twue, Cammy. You wemember it just as well as I do, and so can Calcwtaft; for it is the vewy weason I have

always given for twespassing so indiscweetly upon him."

"As if the circumstances were not totally different now," replied Lady Camilla, impatiently.

"There is no diffewence, Cammy, with respect to me and the solemn charge I weceived fwom Lady Dweadnought. So long as you wemain, I must wemain."

"Very well," retorted his impetuous cousin, as if adopting her resolution as soon as it was conceived. "I shall go to-morrow."

"To-mowwow?" re-echoed Lord Walter languidly. "That would be too pwepestewous."

"Preposterous or not, to-morrow morning I shall go, and you shall accompany me."

"I am awaid that I must decline the honour."

"Didn't you say this very moment that you would remain so long as I remained."

"Yes: I said that I would wemain as long as you wemain; but not that I would weturn when you weturned."

“ It is enough to drive a saint stark staring mad ! I appeal to Sir Charles whether you have not always said that your movements depended entirely and exclusively upon mine ? ”

“ Pewhaps I may have expwessed myself inaccuruately ; but the fact is that my only wesolution was to wemain here as long as you did.”

“ And this solemn promise to Lady Dreadnought ? ”

“ I should be more gwieved than I can say to depart fwom it ; but the truth is, that every thing in this world is relative. It is not wight to bweak a pwomise, but it would be more wong still to desert a fwiend, a twied fwiend, in her distwess. Vinny is now in distwess, and, whatever may be your feelings, I could never weconcile it to mine to forsake her, until this bweeze has blown over.”

“ Would to Heaven that you would consult her feelings, or any body else’s, except your own ! ”

" Except my own ! that's wather wich. Ah ! ah ! ah ! I appeal to Calcwaft whether it is not deplowable to see a person, so shwewd as the wenowned Cammy Daweall, welinquishing all contwol over her weasoning faculties. Nobody knows better than she does that my life is a continual sacwifice at the shwine of duty. While others are in the gay metropolis, absorbed in a most desiwalble wotation of opewas, wouts, and pigeon matches at the Wed House, here am I, wusticating in a wemote pastowal distwict, solely to make myself agweeable to two of my cousins."

" Well," interrupted Lady Camilla, frantically, " do spare us all this jargon, and considering that every person in the house wishes you a hundred miles off, tell us when, and under what circumstances, you will go ?"

" I should only mislead you, Cammy, by endeavouwing to stwike out any pwecise date. In this, as in eweypything else, I am wuled puwely by considewations of duty. As long as you wemain, I must wemain, in compliance

with my pwomise to Lady Dweadnought. Should you pwematuwely wetire fwom the stage, abandoning to her gwief the distwacted Vinny, then the question is weversed, my duty is twansfewwed to her, and I am called upon to wemain more impewatively than before. So long as this bweeze lasts I cannot welinquish my endeavours to pwevent Vinny giving way to a most imaginawy gwievance; and when the bweeze blows over, then shall I most pwobably be entweated by both the enchantwesses to wesume my attendance upon them."

"In short, you mean to treat this house as an hotel, and to stay on as long as ever you please, with Sir Charles's full concurrence, it would appear."

I was about to remind the impetuous speaker that my efforts to ensure her cousin's departure, though unavailing, had been most strenuously and sincerely urged, but I was forestalled by his lordship.

"Don't dwag Calcwaft into it, Cammy;

that wouldn't be fair. Calcwaft's conduct thwoughout has been upwright and iwwepwoachable in the highest degwee. Wecollect that this is not the first time that he has twied to make us compwehend that our woom would be more welcome than our company. But, having given uttewance to ewewy expwession which could most appwopriately convey his feelings in this wespect, he has now the good taste and the good gwace to wemain silent. The owiginal indiscwetion was his in entewing, more or less diwectly, into the conspiwacy to defeat our wighteous object, and in becoming the instwument of poor Vinny's impwisionment. Hence have gwown all these twibulations; but, as we have alweady told him, the vewy fweedom with which we twesplass upon him, is the best pwoof of our confidence in him, and of our weliance in his wish to atone.—”

But Lady Camilla's slender stock of patience had been long since exhausted. Indeed, had it not been for the repeated entreaties conveyed by my look and gestures, she could hardly have

restrained herself from some most undesirable betrayal of her impassioned feelings; and it seemed now as if it were with the intent of precluding any such catastrophe that she so abruptly rushed out of the room.

No sooner were we alone together than his lordship threw himself into a chair, and, bestowing upon me a prolonged wink, exclaimed—

“ Headstrong young lady that, Calcwaft, vewy; but it will all come wight in the end.”

“ You seem quite confident of ultimate success, Lord Walter.”

“ Thowoughly so, old man; and, in the meantime, it is as wefweshing as a play to see that girl in a wage. Did you wemark how bwight her eyes and complexion were, and how her figure was impwoved by all the panting and heaving? What a gweat little taw-taw it is! I’d bet thwee to one in tens that you wouldn’t vewy much object to have the taming of her, eh, Calcwaft?”

“ A laborious undertaking that, Lord Walter,” said I, abstractedly.

“ Labowious, pewhaps, but not disagweeable. Do you know I sometimes think that if it were not for the fear of bweaking poor little Vinny’s heart — ah ! ah ! ah ! But never mind. It’s amusing anyhow to see how gwossly ignowant these poor girls are—with all their quickness—of the wealities of life. They have a gweat deal to learn, to be sure. Are you for a wide, Calcwaft ?”

“ No, thank you, Lord Walter ; not to-day. I have much business on hand.”

“ Vewy well, my good fwieand ; I won’t twespass upon you any further, and will take a gentle twot through the shady wecesses of the woods. But I say, Calcwaft, did anything stwike you pawticulawly to-day ?”

“ A great many things have struck me, Lord Walter ?”

“ Ah ! but I mean with wespect to Selina Bwown’s letter, and the extwaordinawy wage into which it has thrown Cammy. I know she is vewy peppewy, and weally fond of Vinny ; but it is not natuwal that, for these

weasons only, she should be so thowoughly disgusted. Ah! ah! ah! you are a lucky fellow, Calcwaft, and vewy fortunate."

"In what respect, may I ask, Lord Walter?"

"In what wespect? Why you have we-tived fwom the stage, and are no longer we-sponsible for such dweadful consequences as my pwesence alone pwoduces among these sensitive cweatures. I don't twy to bweak their little hearts; I take it all vewy coolly, fwigidly, you know, like 'the dwy.' But, somehow or other, though weally there is not woom enough for them all, they will come teawing and wushing in, like the cwowd at the opewa, ready to destwoy each other in the scwamble. I dare say you think it vewy gwatifying to me, Calcwaft—don't you now?"

"I should imagine it was so indeed, Lord Walter."

"Well, you are wong there, old man, quite out of your weckoning. It's pwovoking, vewy pwovoking, and nothing else. What with

Selina Bwown and that tweasure Vinny, and Cammy Daweall, for I suppose she must now be inscwibed on the wegister, and sevewal others, whom I am too discweet to mention, I am bwought to the vewy limits of distwac-tion. You won't wide?"

"No, thank you, Lord Walter."

"Then I wish you a vewy good after-noon."

CHAPTER VIII.

AT dinner time, when we entered the dining-room, Lady Camilla, Lord Walter, and I, his lordship, observing that covers were laid for us three only, exclaimed—

“Isn’t Vinny coming?”

“No,” answered Lady Camilla, repulsively.

“She shouldn’t dwead meeting me, she weally shouldn’t,” whispered he more complacently than ever to his cousin.

“Dread meeting you? Trust to her for that,” was the muttered reply.

“I understand that her mother particularly requested she should dine with her,” observed I in the same tone.

"She is vewy thick with her mother just now—ah ! ah ! ah !—isn't she Cammy ?"

"She is, and so am I."

"It's a pity you didn't wemain upstairs—ah ! ah ! ah !—and dine with her too."

"I should, at least, have avoided the most disagreeable society into which I could well be thrown."

"That wouldn't be vewy complimentawy to us, Calcwaft, if we didn't know that it was to be wead backwards." But the nearer presence of the servants forbade the actual continuance of these hostilities.

During the remainder of the dinner, every effort was made by Lady Camilla to maintain a spirited conversation with me, to the entire exclusion of her cousin ; but these endeavours were foiled with imperturbable good humour by the intended victim. Upon every topic introduced, he would throw in some observations of his own, noticing, merely by an occasional wink at me, the invariable absence of any reply from the implacable maiden. And

when she rose to leave us, he said, almost within her hearing :

“ What a vewy good plan it is, eh, Calcwaft? to take things coolly, fwigidly like ‘the dwy.’ She is tolewably headstwong, is Cammy Daweall, yet she did not succeed in sending me to Coventwy, did she? ”

“ Your spirits have certainly not been dashed, Lord Walter, by the occurrences of the day.”

“ No ; I have been wather amused than otherwise. A little vawiety is agweeable, after all ; and then, doesn’t it stwike you that this pwolonged wage of Cammy’s, whatever may have been its cause, is vewy becoming.”

“ She undoubtedly is in great beauty to-night.”

“ Vewy gweat. I never did see her eyes so bwight before ; they positively went thwough one. It’s a pity a man can’t mawwy two girls at once.”

“ Some people think one wife enough, Lord Walter. Wouldn’t two be sometimes hard to manage, besides Miss Selina Brown? ”

"I don't know, Calcwaft. It seems to me according to my pwinciple, the fwigid pwinciple, I mean, that a man may see a gweat deal of life, with vewy little annoyance. The owientals have sevewal wives, wegral sewaglios of them, and we don't hear that they have more domestic twoubles than we have. Now that we are getting our heads bwoken for them, I think we might bowwow that much fwom them."

"It is a question that may require consideration."

His lordship finished his glass of claret, replenished it again, and then resumed, after a short interval of reflection :

"Speaking to you, Calcwaft, fweely, as to a twied and valued fwiend, there is one thing that I would wegwt in Selina Bwown's letter, if my wegwt could pwevent what is passed and over. You wead the letter?"

"I did not indeed, Lord Walter."

"Well, you heard the pwincipal extwacts."

"I could not but overhear the portions that Lady Camilla read out."

"It's a gweat pity that she intwoduced the compawison of the mawlin-spike. The gweat mischief must have been done by that. The living in the same stweet—the unintewwupted intewcourse, and all those wubbishy pwomises were, after all, but indiwect gwievances. I am vewy much awaid that the compawison will have stwuck diwectly home at the feelings. It is surpwising how those girls abhor compawisons to their own disadvantage, particuwarly where they feel there may be a shadow of twuth. It would be widiculous to compare Vinny, sewiously, to a mawlin-spike; though she is so gwaceful and slender, her shape is iwwepwoachable of its kind. Still, she has seen Selina Bown at the opewa, and must know that, in point of figure, she cannot be compawed to the said Selina. Why Selina Bown, though bawely taller, must weigh neawly thwee-stone more than Vinny, and yet they both can wear the same sash; I have twied it myself."

"Indeed."

"I have wepeatedly. Cammy and I were gweat fwiends then, and she pwocured me a sash of Vinny's, which I was to twarehouse up as a twemendous favour, and so I did, until thwee or four days afterwards Selina Bwown managed to get hold of it, and then I bet her two to one in fives, that she couldn't put it on and bweathe comfortably. She did put it on though, and sang thwee Ethiopian sewenades in it quite fweely, so that I had to pwoduce the amount."

"And who eventually retained possession of the sash?"

"I did my best to wecover it; but, as she would not wrestore it at any pwice, I was constained to take it fwigidly and bide my time. Well, what do you think gweeted my view a week afterwards,—half the sash tied wound her little dog's neck. I delibewately kicked the wretched animal out of the woom; upon which, in wushes Selina Bwown herself, in a towewing wage, and I gave her, too, a piece and a half of my mind. Don't you think that I was quite wight, Calewaft?"

"I can understand the warmth of your feelings."

"Not that I was weally angwy, you know; that isn't in my nature; but I thought she was twifling overmuch with the pwoerty of her betters, and wequived something of a warning. To wevert, however, to our pwevious topic, were it not for my pwinciple never to yield to unnecessawy gwief, I should be sowwy—vewy sowwy—for that compawison."

Feeling it incumbent here to say something in my turn, I observed :

"I cannot but think, Lord Walter, that you attach rather undue importance to this portion of the transaction. It is scarcely probable that Miss Dieaway should more deeply feel an unfavourable remark with respect to her figure, than the prospect of unlimited and preconcerted neglect which your correspondence with Miss Brown seems to hold out to her."

"With all defewence to your expewience, Calcwaft, in these matters, I must submit that mine points in the contwawy diwection. Un-

favourable compawisons are, I have evewy weason to believe, the gweatest offence into which a man can be betwayed against a pwetty girl. For, as to the pwomises, it weally is cleawer than daybweak that they were only intended, in connection with the little cheque, to cawwy us thwough a wather delicate pewid of twansition. It is not the pwomises, Calcwaft, it's the compawison which has pwoduced the bweeze, and Selina Bwown would have been just as wabid, if any one had weversed it in Vinny's favour."

"Perhaps though, Lord Walter, Miss Dieaway's standard may not be precisely the same as that of the young lady to whom you are alluding."

"There may be a diffewence, to be sure; but we must wemember that the natuwal affinity will often pwevail, and cawwy the day. After all, Selina Bwown is vewy well connected: her sister mawwied a bawonet and, when she settles down, she does not mean to thwow herself away on anything less than a peer. But now, as I have imbibed quite clawet

enough, and as you dwink none, shall we pwoceed into the next woom, to watch the pwogress of events there. It is vewy intewesting to twace out the pwogress of events, after a bweeze like this, when one has self contwol enough to take evewything fwigidly."

His lordship's self-command was destined here to be put to a fresh test; for, on entering the drawing-room, we found Lavinia there, in earnest conversation with her cousin. When she beheld us, she rose, and with a native dignity which a tragedy queen would have long studied to emulate, she came forward to meet me, requested me to excuse her absence during the day, and then, having bestowed one single look upon my companion, most significantly turned her back upon him. But the look alone would have sufficed. Gracious heavens ! what a glance it was, as for an instant her dark pupil seemed to grow white with indignation and contempt.

"I think she didn't wecognise me ; she must have taken me for old Wedhill. The

wesemblance may not be vewy stwiking—ah! ah! ah! but people who have eyelashes thwee inches long must be wather shortsighted. My own teweasure —”

But his lordship's appeal was relentlessly interrupted :

“ You will protect me against him, won't you, Sir Charles, so long as I am under your roof?” exclaimed Vinny, drawing close to me.

As her up-raised eyes then encountered mine, I felt as if the whole chivalry of my boyhood were kindling within me again, and there is no saying by what rash word or deed I might not have established the prerogatives of my championship had not Lord Walter, with superior discretion, observed at once :—

“ It is hardly wight, my deawest wose-bud, to dwag Calcwaft into the quawwel. We are all under his woof, and he wishes to wemain neutwal. As for me, I wouldn't be intwusive for the world.”—

“ But you are intrusive and disagreeable to a degree,” cried Lady Camilla. “ Come now,

show what little sense and good breeding you have by, once for all, leaving Vinny alone."

"I can't leave her alone as long as she wemains with you and Calcwaft."—

"No nonsense now, and don't make bad worse."

"It's you that are making bad worse, old fellow, by pweventing Vinny and me fwom coming to a satisfactowy cleawing up."

"I want no clearing up, Walter," said Lavinia, haughtily. "Everything is perfectly clear, perfectly intelligible."

"But no one was ever twied in England, and condemned too, without a heawing."

"You have had your hearing, and it has aggravated your case tenfold," answered Lady Camilla. "Now, if you don't go and read your papers quietly in that arm-chair, and leave us in peace, Vinny and I will go up to Lady Edward, with Sir Charles, for the rest of the evening."

"Vewy good; take it fwigidly, and so will I. The stwonger the bweeze, the sooner it will blow out its stwength. I said I would not be intwusive, and I won't; so you need

not depwive poor Vinny of the gwatification she is seeking in somebody's society—Calcwaft's, I suppose."

"It so happens that I did come down to see him, and him alone."

"Ah ! ah ! ah ! Vewy good, vewy wich indeed. Pewhaps, you had better mawwy Calcwaft. Ah ! ah ! ah !"

"Come along, Vinny, dear !" cried Lady Camilla, impatiently ; "remaining on here, if this is to continue, is quite out of the question."

"Don't be too pwecipitate, Cammy, there's a good fellow !" exclaimed his lordship. "See, I am wetwing into my corner, where I can look over some pwints."

"Mind you stay out of our way, that's all," said Lady Camilla. "Now, what shall we do ? I will play you a tune, if you like ; while you, Sir Charles, can, according to promise, teach Vinny the noble game of chess."

All parties having assented to this arrangement, it was carried out forthwith ; but, ere ten minutes had elapsed, Lord Walter drew

near Miss Dieaway and me, to inspect the progress of our game.

"I won't go on," exclaimed my companion, resolutely, "if Walter comes here to annoy me."

"But I am tiwed of the pwintz, my tweasure. No cwiminal was ever sentenced to a whole hour's pwintz at a time."

"Nay, but, Lord Walter," observed I, "why give additional offence and provocation?"

"My dear fellow," was the reply, "if you were weally neutwal, you could not but we-mark that the pwovocation is fwom the other quarter. As a fwee-born Bwiton, I may wove and wange in whatever diwection I please; and I am not aware that there is any pwe-scwibed wadius.—"

But Lady Camilla had now rushed to the rescue.

"Walter," cried she, "will you go and sit down where you were just now!"

"Pwesently, old fellow; but I weally must stwetch my legs a little. I have had such a dweadful cwamp."

“ If you don’t go back to that chair immediately, do you know what I will do.”

“ You will twy and make me ; that would be vewy wich—ah ! ah ! ah ! Let’s see who is stwongest.”

“ I know you are twice stronger than I am ; but I will match you yet. If you don’t do what I tell you, I will get my hat, run round to the stables, and scratch the panels of your drag all over with my scissors.”

“ Why should you wevenge yourself upon the inoffensive dwag ?” remonstrated his lordship, a little staggered at length by this last threat.

“ Because it is the only thing in the world you care for besides yourself.”

“ Calcwaft, what weasurers these pwetty girls are, to be sure,” said his lordship. “ One minute the gwievance is, that I care for nothing but myself and the dwag ; the next, that I am in love with ewevybody, wight and left.”

“ Still, Lord Walter, I think it would be a

pity that your beautiful drag should be injured; and Lady Camilla will, certainly, be as good as her word."

"Vewy well," responded he. "Now that I have stwetched my legs, I can wead the papers a little over there, if that will make all sewene again."

All was accordingly serene enough again for a short time, when Mr. Redhill re-entered and, approaching Lord Walter with more than usual gravity, said—

"I beg your lordship's pardon, but your groom wishes to speak to your lordship."

"Wichard? where is he?"

"In the front hall, my lord."

"What do you think that he can wequire, Wedhill, at this advanced pewiod of the day?"

"I believe, my lord, that one of your lordship's horses has been taken very bad with cramps."

"Taken vewy bad with cwamps, Wedhill? That might be wather sewious. I had better go wound with Wichard myself."

No sooner had the door closed upon his lordship than Lady Camilla, starting up from the piano-forte, joined us, and said—

“Certainly these are the most timely cramps that ever were heard of. Now let us make the most of our opportunity for a few words in private. I have no notion how we shall get him to go, have you, Sir Charles?”

“Not the slightest.”

“Have you, Vinny, dear?”

“Not the remotest.”

“And you really wish him to go, Miss Dieaway?”

There was no misinterpreting the clear, steady, resolute look which encountered mine, as Lavinia replied—

“How can you doubt it?”

“Then, it is for you both, allow me to say,” continued I, “to devise the means.”

“We feel it,” replied Lady Camilla, “and we shall succeed, trust to us for that; but it requires some consideration. I say, Vinny,

darling, what's going on in that clever little pate of yours?"

"Nothing particular, dearest."

"Now, don't tell stories. Did you ever remark, Sir Charles, that those eyes of Vinny's, which generally look so doleful—as if wearing mourning for all the havoc they commit—will brighten up with the most extraordinary expression of playfulness, when any little native fun crosses her mind?"

"I have observed it more than once, Lady Camilla."

"Well, there is something, even now, irresistibly comical lurking under those absurd eye-lashes; for they really are out of all due proportion. Come, tell us what it is, you little Witch of Endor."

"I was only thinking, Cammy, that there certainly is a sort of supernatural connection between Walter and the drag which we might, perhaps, turn to some account. He really was cowed a little when you threatened to scratch it; and you remember Susan telling

us that, on the morning when it went for the geraniums, which he never much liked, she found him up, in his dressing-gown, and sorely perplexed as to whether he should not go too?"

"Oh! yes; I recollect that very well."

"Now, if you were only to order the drag round, tell his servant to pack up his things, while we are at breakfast to-morrow, and then request Mr. Redhill, to announce, in his usual deliberate manner, that the drag is at the door, there is no saying what might not occur."

"It is certainly worth trying," answered Lady Camilla thoughtfully; "particularly if I settle to go in it."

"But it would be shocking to lose you, dearest Cammy, wouldn't it, Sir Charles?"

"It would indeed."

"You are very kind and complimentary both of you, upon my word; but, if Walter is to move at all, I am in for a trip to Dreadnought any how,—I felt that from the first. However, a day going, a day there, and a day

“ And what did you give him ? ”

“ Some hot bwandy and water, with laudanum in it.”

“ Nonsense.”

“ We weally did ; it was Wichard’s wemedy, and it certainly cawwied off the cwamps at a gweat wate.”

“ That’s the principal thing. We should be in despair, should not we, Vinny, were anything to happen just now to the team ? ”

“ We should indeed, Cammy.”

“ I scarcely know anything which would annoy us more, eh, Vinny ? ”

“ Nor I,” was the laughing rejoinder.

“ It is vewy kind of you, upon my word,” said his lordship, complacently. “ I can only take it as a pwoof of intewest, eh Calcwaft ? It would make a new pwoverb : Love me, love my dwag ; ah ! ah ! ah ! But I say, Cammy, hasn’t there been stwumming enough for to-night ? Supposing we had a little wational conversation.”

His cousin having merely replied by in-

creasing the rapidity and energy of her execution, and Lavinia being completely absorbed in her game of chess, his lordship saw no alternative but to return to his unfinished newspaper.

So soon as our game was concluded, Miss Dieaway rose and made a little sign to Lady Camilla, upon which they both wished me a hearty good-night and, without vouchsafing a word or a look to Lord Walter, they glided hastily out of the room.

“I have a gweat mind to wun after them,” observed he, languidly; “this wetweat has quite taken me by surpwise. Ah well! it will all come wight in the end. The more pwe-postewous their conduct now, the gweater will be their wegret and wepentance heweafter and the more agweeable the weconciliation. You’d give sixpence for the weconciliation that is in store for me, you old wuffian, wouldn’t you?”

My two fair visitors were unusually punctual at breakfast on the following morning and, though Lady Camilla was in her travelling dress, never had I seen either of them more

attractive than on this occasion. If Miss Die-away seemed to have borrowed for the hour something of her cousin's resolute spirit, the loss of it could not be traced in Lady Cammy's beaming eye ; and Lord Walter's habitual complacency would, if possible, have been still further exalted could he have known with what impatience he was awaited.

At length, our expecting eyes were gratified by his appearance as he entered more radiant and self-satisfied than ever.

"Good morning, Calcwaft, good morning all wound," was his earliest greeting. "No weply fwom the enchantwesses ? Still in disgwace—ah ! ah ! ah ! I should have to meditate self-destwuction, were it not for the stwawbewwies. Give us a wespectable supply, pway, old fellow, with cweam in pwoportion."

But Lady Camilla was satisfied to push the dish towards him in the most contemptuous fashion.

"I say," resumed his lordship, hopelessly insensible to the slight, "why are you in your twavelling dwess?"

No answer being given, I thought it right to state the unpacified maiden's intention.

"Vewy good," replied his lordship. "As a fwee-born Bwiton, she has a wight to go where and when she pleases."

"Of course, I expect, you, in common civility, to come with me, as you are by way of being in charge of me," observed Lady Camilla, here, with most chilling coldness.

"So I would, with the gweatest pleasure, if I could weconcile it to my feelings, and my duty towards others."

"If, by others, you mean me, Walter," said Miss Dieaway, in her most supercilious tone, "you will be so good as to remember that what I require is, that you should no longer remain under the same roof with me."

"But, my tweasure ——"

"Don't address me in that fashion any more, if you please: I will not submit to it. You came here in charge of Cammy, and if she returns, you are bound to return with her."

"But you forget, Vinny, that evewything in this world is wrelative. I cannot weturn until I have had a wegular heawing upon this little misunderstanding which has spwung up."

"You will have to wait some time until I grant you that."

"Vewy well, I must take it fwigidly, like 'the dwy.'"

"And so you decline to accompany me," said Lady Camilla, imperiously, "though all here request and require it?"

"I should be sowwy to wefuse you anything you wequest, Cammy; but as evewything in this world is wrelative—"

"Exactly; don't pester us with all that nonsense again. You don't mean to come, and there's an end of it. I can find my way very well alone, and here is the drag coming round, so it is all right."

"The dwag coming wound!" exclaimed his lordship, really somewhat surprised. "What on earth can the dwag be coming wound for?"

"To take me back to Dreadnought, I

presume. Do you think that I am going to walk?"

"No; but there's some misappwehension. I never ordewed the dwag wound."

"Perhaps not, but I did. I came in the drag, and, as a matter of course, I shall go back in the drag."

"Ah! but this is a question of pwoerty, you know, Cammy; and I am under the im-
pwession that the pwoerty of the dwag wesides in me."

"I don't care about your impressions of property. The drag brought me here, and the drag shall take me back; you shall see if it don't."

"And who's to dwive, pway?"

"Richard, of course."

"Wichard to drive? You must be mad—stark, stawing mad! Wichard is not to be twusted to dwive for five minutes."

"He drove very well to Dreadnought, and back with the geraniums."

"With the gewaniums! and a pwetty

business that was, too. But then you had only a pair, and now you have ordewed wound the whole team."

"Of course. Did you expect me to go with a pair?"

"But wemember I may want the dwag, old fellow, and so may Calcwaft. He is vewy fond of a dwive in the dwag, is Calcwaft."

"Then you must both do without it to-day, that's all. You shall have it back this evening, in time for to-morrow."

"In time for to-mowwow, Cammy! You must have been cawousing upon something tolevably stwong before bweakfast this morning. At what wate do you exect the dwag to go, if it is to be back here fwom Dweadnought to-night?"

"How can I tell? eighteen or twenty miles an hour. We will breathe them at the 'Cock and Sparrow,' of course."

"You will find wemarkably little bweath in the nags by the time you weach the 'Cock and Spawwow,' at that wate, I can tell you,"

ejaculated his lordship, beginning to look rather blank. "Is all this weally sewious, Cammy?"

"Oh no, not at all. It is only a joke, but a joke I mean to carry through, Mr. Walter, or my name is not Cammy Dareall."

"But you have no wight, my good fwiend, to destwoy nags, and valuable nags, too, which are the pwoperty of others."

"I shan't destroy them, Lord love you, man. I shall do them a world of good by making them stretch their legs a little. Why, the common old coaches used to go twelve miles an hour, and we are game to beat them any day, I should hope. Ah! there's Mr. Redhill. Is my maid ready, pray?"

"Yes, my lady, quite ready."

"Then, as I have no time to lose, good-bye, Vinny dearest; kiss me again, darling—farewell!"

"Not for long, you know, dearest."

"To be sure not; don't I leave you that darling Billy as a pledge of my speedy return?"

"Then why on earth are you huwwying away thus?" said Lord Walter.

"Because I have business at Dreadnought, that's all. Good-bye, Sir Charles; I never can thank you enough for all your kindness, and if it were a real long parting, I should feel quite _____"

"Oh, never mind, Lady Camilla, what we should all feel if we were parting in earnest, which we must trust is not the case."

While we thus spoke, Miss Dieaway and I were escorting our departing friend to the hall-door, with Lord Walter bringing up the rear in unfeigned perplexity.

"You can get inside," said Lady Camilla, to her maid, "and I will sit on the top, close behind Richard, to see that he makes the nags step out a bit. Keep back that darling Billy, Vinny, or he will certainly break his little neck scrambling up after me."

"I don't feel vewy comfortable about this pwecious expedition," said Lord Walter to me, confidentially.

"I can fully understand your uneasiness," was my reply.

"I shouldn't be long going as far as Dweadnought, to see that the dwag and all were not ruined on the way," added he, musingly.

"No, no—not at all," cried Lady Camilla. "You wouldn't come when you were asked, and now I don't want you."

"But I have a wight to go in my own dwag, haven't I?"

"'Wight' or no 'wight,' you shan't come to day; you would only be preventing our going as quick as I wish to go. Wouldn't he, Sir Charles?"

"Certainly, Lady Camilla, Lord Walter's scruples, as owner of the horses, might interfere with your speed."

"Still, I may have business at Dweadnought, like anybody else."

"Oh, I dare say, that won't do," exclaimed Lady Camilla. "Now, Richard, move on, or you will never get back again here to-night."

"But——Wichard, Wichard," cried Lord Walter, almost alarmed, "I'll dwive myself, and there's an end of it. Wedhill, just call my servant."

"He is here in the hall, my lord."

"I say," continued his lordship, "you wouldn't be long putting up my dwessing case, and what I shall wequire for a night at Dweadnought."

"No, my lord. Hearing that the drag was ordered round, and that Lady Camilla was going, I got everything ready, and had partly packed your lordship's things," was the valet's reply.

"Then look alive, man, as Lady Camilla appears to be in a twemendous huwwy."

"Upon my word, I have a great mind to start without you," cried his cousin from her exalted seat. "What nonsense this is, delaying us now that we were fairly off."

"Well, you must take it fwigidly, Cammy, that's all, for Wichard won't start without me, you may wely upon that. I am sowwy to leave

you, Calcwaft, vewy sowwy," proceeded his lordship, "but that fellow Cammy is weally not to be twusted with the dwag."

" You will be on the safer side, certainly, Lord Walter, by superintending the progress in person."

" So I pwesume. And now, Vinny, that I am entewing on this pewilous undertaking, I hope you will wemember how pwecawious is eweypything in this life, and how sowwy we should be to have sepawated with angwy feelings should any catastwophe occur."

But Miss Dieaway was all unmoved by this eloquent appeal, and, if she responded to it at all, it was merely by embracing more frantically than before, with sundry very pointed tributes to his faithfulness, the too happy Billy, whom she still held in her arms. His lordship, however, was not to be provoked.

" The bweeze is not over yet, Calcwaft," observed he to me, with a prolonged wink. " Pe'waps she had better mawwy Billy, ah ! ah ! ah !"

"She will marry no one who has not Billy's chief attribute," was Lavinia's fierce rejoinder; but the servants having now reappeared with the trunks, Lady Camilla was more clamorous than ever to depart.

"We can't start before we are weady, Cammy," said her cousin, apathetically, "so you had better take it fwigidly. I say, Wedhill, that little twunk farther off over the woof, with the dwessing case inside, if you please. That's all wight. Now by-by Calcwaft; we'll soon be bwought together again. And Vinny—well, there's no help for it, and it will only make the weconciliation more attwactive."

There was, indeed, no help for it, for, to avoid her cousin's nearer approach, Miss Dieaway had withdrawn close behind me. In a moment more, Lord Walter was at his post on the box, and amidst a rapid exchange of valedictory salutations, the drag moved steadily off.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE feeling absorbed me as I re-entered the partly deserted house ;—a feeling, not all of joy, not all of relief, and yet, not all of sorrow nor of regret. But I had small leisure to analyze any impressions of my own. What were those of the fair being upon whose footsteps I was treading as we returned together to the breakfast room ?—that was more to the purpose.

At first, Miss Dieway smiled languidly as I complimented her upon the successful issue of her conception ; but Mr. Billy, though still nestling in her arms, was by no means recon-

ciled to his mistress' abrupt departure. In spite of all the endearments lavished upon him, he would testify his dissatisfaction by many a plaintive whine, so that his gentle comforter must needs sit down, fold him still closer to her heart and foster him with yet warmer sympathy. One further glance at the drooping head and averted face warned me that it would be indiscreet to intrude upon those good offices, and a few minutes of silence ensued.

It was first broken by Miss Dieaway.

"I suppose," muttered she, without raising her eyes, "that I should tell mamma that they are gone."

"Do you think that she does not know it already?"

"Perhaps she does: it is such good news for her. But she might like to hear it from me, with some details."

As there was an apparent disinclination on the part of Miss Lavinia to accomplish at once this imaginary duty, I thought that I should best respond to her secret feelings by merely saying:

“ I presume there is no immediate hurry ;
had you not better wait a few minutes ? ”

“ Why ? ”

It is a short word that which was thus uttered, in a tone so low as to be scarcely audible—one of the shortest words in this or in any other language ; but it seemed to me as comprehensive as many a studied oration. Did I misapprehend its full bearing, or did it mean, being interpreted by the heart :—“ tell me what your feelings are and enquire what are mine ? ” At all events, I spoke after this reading.

“ I think you need not go until—until Billy is quite comforted.”

“ He is so, it seems, now. His little distress was soon over, or, at all events, soon subdued.”

“ That of others, I trust, will not be more lasting, and so it may as well not be seen where it might be misunderstood.”

“ You are speaking of mine, I suppose.”

“ I am.”

“ How do you know that I am sad.”

“ Because I felt that you must be. Partings are always sorrowful.”

“ She is coming back immediately, you know,” was the insidious rejoinder.

“ Lady Camilla will return immediately, I hope; but she will not bring back with her —the past.”

The dark eyes were here for the first time raised towards me ; and then, the tell-tale stream might be discerned moistening the bright cheek that it could not sully.

Had I gone too far ? No !

“ You wished him to leave, you know,” resumed I.

“ I did.”

“ If I had not heard so, distinctly, from your own lips, I should not have taken the small—the very small share I have had in this morning’s proceedings.”

“ I dare say you would not ; you are always kind and considerate. No doubt you are very glad that they are gone.”

Still that plural !

“ All who take a deep interest in your fate, Vinny, must find something to rejoice at, and something to sorrow for, in the occurrences of the last twenty-four hours.”

The drooping head was slightly, very slightly, tossed.

“ Do you doubt the sincerity of these sentiments, Lavinia ?”

“ No ; not exactly.”

“ Vinny, on a far distant strand, where every fiendish passion of our nature is now unloosed ; every day—every hour—a hostile bullet will find its murderous lodgment in some human frame. Should it not be removed forthwith, the doom is certain—inevitable. Would it be meet to distrust the feelings of those who, having counselled this salutary operation, were watching its progress with anguish which cannot be described, and yet with a rapture of returning hope.”

“ No, perhaps not,” was the murmured reply ; “ but, still, the patient may be allowed

to show some symptoms of what he is undergoing."

"Undoubtedly ; were it otherwise, our sympathies would recoil, as it were, from some unearthly insensibility. Lavinia, you know something of me now : you do not, you cannot, think that it is so with mine to-day."

"No ; you would support the head, or bathe the temples, or clasp the hand, during the operation. Others would deny or deride the sufferings."

"Others, Vinny ! You don't mean your mother ?"

"I mentioned no names."

"Well, it is better, at all events, that you should not have gone to her too soon. Every minute, every hour, will bring to you the increased conviction that you have been providentially rescued from a peril the greatest of all, and that there is something inexpressibly hopeful in your present sorrow."

Again the gentle head was very slightly tossed, and another short interval of silence ensued.

“Do you remember,” resumed Miss Die-away, but still without raising her eyes—“do you remember the day I arrived here with mamma?”

“I do, perfectly.”

“We were alone together at first for a short time.”

“We were.”

“I did not know so much of you then; I was sorry to be here and not very conversible. For want of something better to say, I suppose, you asked me if I had many—in short—many admirers.”

“Did I?”

“Do you recollect what I answered?”

“No, not exactly,”

“I said that I had not and did not require them; that all I wished for was one true and faithful heart.”

“You did; I can remember it now.”

“I then thought,” proceeded she, in a strangely thrilling tone; “I then thought that I had found one. It was a happy, too happy dream. It is over now.”

I was afraid that she would give way still more, for her head, which had remained all through bent over little Billy, now well nigh rested upon her knee; but in a moment it was raised again.

The struggle was over.

"I think I may go now," resumed Miss Dieaway, releasing Billy from his happy durance and rising herself.

"What! so soon?"

"I think I am quite ready. Don't I look so?"

The mournful eyes now steadfastly encountered mine, whilst a smile—the most sorrowful that I ever beheld—played for a second on her speaking countenance.

"Will you not stay a few minutes more?"

Miss Dieaway sat down again.

How enchanting is all concession, the slightest, the most unmeaning from such a quarter! Fortunate, indeed, was it for me that Lady Camilla's memorable warning in the summer-house recurred so forcibly to my thoughts in that hour.

"You say that one happy dream is over," observed I. "In life there are many such, but they are dreams only, and when they vanish why, so long as youth remains, all remains."

"So Cammy says."

"And you don't believe her?"

"I do not think that there are many kindred spirits in this world, and they may not always meet."

"It would not be very presumptuous to hope for one more congenial than that we are both alluding to."

"Perhaps not; but this is rather strange conversation for you and me. I cannot make out how we ever began it."

"I hope you will never have cause to regret any marks of confidence that you may show me."

"I dare say not; at all events, we shall not have much more opportunity."

"Indeed? Why so?"

"Because I don't think mamma will stay here much longer now."

“Really?”

“You saw her yesterday, did not you?”

“I did; but I made no sort of allusion to the occurrences of the morning.”

“I should imagine not; but didn’t it strike you that she was particularly revived?”

“Certainly. I have not seen her looking so strong and well since she came here.”

“Exactly; and from something which fell from her, I think that she no longer feels unequal to the move and to that terrible packing.”

“It would be rather strange that she should leave Rockingham Hall just when the principal objection to your staying here is removed.”

“Perhaps so; but mamma is given to act according to the impulse of the moment; and then—the principal objection to our return to town is removed also.”

“I suppose that you would still be glad to go to London?”

“I am quite indifferent now. Mamma may think it better for me, but she won’t find me very anxious to go out.”

"Still, the change of scene and life may be beneficial, of course."

"It may. I have been very happy here, at times; but very unhappy too."

"I wish I could think that you bore away with you a more pleasing impression of your stay."

She raised her eye-brows slightly, but soon afterwards she resumed—

"You have been very kind to me all through, and I can never forget it. When the time comes, I dare say, I shall be quite sorry to go, in a way. But perhaps we shall meet again, in London or somewhere."

"That is not very probable. My London and my travelling days are over."

"I don't see why: you will find it rather dull here when we are all gone, and may wish for a little change."

"Every change is not for the better, particularly at my time of life."

"You always speak as if you were such a very old man."

"Not yet a very old man, Lavinia; but scarcely the reverse."

"Ah, well! I really must go to mamma. I suppose I may venture to appear before her now."

"Let me see," said I, seizing her two hands, and proceeding to the inspection so artlessly suggested. "The hair sits unimpeachably. The dark eyes are sad, but no longer sorrowful. The lips are ready to smile again, if there is an occasion. The bloom of the cheek is all undimmed. Stay, there is something which might tell its tale in the corner of that left eyelash: they are so long, really, that each might bear a string of such pearls. May I wipe it off with your handkerchief?"

"No, thank you, I can do that," said she, laughing and blushing a little, "I really had better have looked in the glass at once."

"It would have spoken far more emphatically than I have."

"Nonsense. You are worse than Walter. I shall have to discard you too."

She glided from my view, and I was alone again.

My solitary musings were not very cheerful. I could not have expected that the present would last for ever : but still, it was startling, very startling, to learn that what might have been deemed a fortunate occurrence, was so pregnant with evil ;—that I, too, might soon have to say—‘ My dream is past and gone.’

At luncheon, who should appear with Lavinia but Lady Edward herself, in the highest force. She talked, she laughed, very much more than was her wont ; and as her unusual spirits seemed to react in an inverse ratio upon her daughter’s, sundry little stimulants were applied to the latter, more pointed or personal than was always agreeable. Upon the whole, however, poor Vinny stood fire pretty well, and acknowledged all my indirect efforts to protect and to sustain her by more than one grateful glance.

Agreeably to my cousin’s request, I had ordered the open carriage at three o’clock ;

but, as the hour drew near, a treacherous cloud spread over the bright sky of the morning, and Lady Edward, who dreaded damp beyond all things, became alarmed for her drive.

“What do you think of the weather, Charles?” said she. “It was so very promising when I came down.”

“I don’t know what to say; it is raining fast now,” replied I, from the window.

“It is, indeed,” said Vinny, drawing near me. “How suddenly it has come on. I am afraid they will get wet.”

“Dear me, how very sad,” observed her mother, rather ironically. “Just fancy if he were to catch cold, or to spoil his new hat.”

“I was only thinking of Cammy,” answered Miss Dieaway, reproachfully.

“Of course not; for, if it rains, she will have to drive while others are taking very good care of themselves inside. Well, Charles, cannot you give me any hopes of getting out?”

As I was examining the sky more attentively, Lavinia, drawing closer to me, whispered—

“Say you think it will rain.”

I answered that, though there were some prospects of a short clear, I thought the afternoon would be showery.

“Then it won’t do for me,” said Lady Edward.

“Don’t despair too hastily,” added I. “At all events, the carriage is ordered, and it will be a charity to give the horses a little exercise.”

Miss Vinny here looked rather reproachfully at me; but, as I was playing for a high stake, I had made some venture, and I succeeded.

“It will be a greater charity, still, to give that unfortunate girl a little air. I was anxious to go out on her account principally.”

“Thank you very much, dear mamma; but I shall do very well at home,” answered her

daughter, with a side glance at me, which seemed to say : "I owed you this."

"I don't think you will do very well, Vinny, moping and pining in the house," resumed her mother. "I dare say that Charles will kindly let you have the carriage for half-an-hour, between the showers."

"Perhaps he would, and might even be persuaded to accompany Miss Vinny, if mamma approves," replied I.

"Mamma approves very much indeed," was the maternal answer. "And you, Vinny, like a good girl, go and put your things on, so as to be ready to start the moment the weather allows."

Miss Vinny retired accordingly, with just as much alacrity as due deference called for, and I remained alone with my cousin for the first time since the late momentous occurrences.

"Great events, these, Charles," observed she.

"Very great, indeed."

"I hope you congratulate me."

"I do, most sincerely."

"They really appear quite providential."

"They do."

"I feel as if they had given me a new life; and if I can only keep that foolish, silly girl from fretting, I shall do very well."

"May I hazard an observation on this head?"

"Pray do."

"Would not it be better, now that all is in the right course, not to risk bringing on a reaction by—you will forgive the word—by such sarcastic observations."

"Have I been betrayed into any?"

"Perhaps, you have."

"Then I must be more cautious, for you are quite right. The fact is, I am so angry with that odious monster, that really it is fortunate we are no longer under the same roof."

"I can fully understand and share your feelings."

"And so would Vinny, if she had a spark of self-respect."

“ You wouldn’t think her deficient on that head, if you had witnessed her bearing towards him last night and this morning. But you must allow for a little prostration to-day, after so much excitement.”

“ To be sure. I suppose that I shall have to go to London with her now, before the season is quite over.”

It struck me that my cousin looked rather inquiringly at me as she thus spoke ; but I cautiously answered that I was too deeply interested in the matter to venture an opinion.

“ So you are not tired of us yet, Charles ?”

“ No, indeed. And if, as I trust, Lady Camilla returns according to her promise, we may see Lavinia brighten up a little, even in this dreary solitude.”

“ She ought to be both cheerful and happy here ; but London has its pleasures and —— and its advantages.”

Again that attentive glance ; but I merely answered :—

‘ Who would dare to compete with Lon-

don? But how welcome you are here, and how sorry I shall be to lose you, I trust I need not repeat."

"Well, we shall see how I feel, and how Vinny looks during the next few days."

Lavinia here reappeared, and, soon afterwards, a decided improvement having taken place in the weather, the carriage was ordered round, and we were despatched together for our constitutional drive.

"Where shall we go?" inquired I, as the footman touched his hat for the orders.

"I don't care at all," was the reply.

"Would you mind my looking in at the farm, where I have a word to say?"

"I shall be delighted."

To the farm we accordingly proceeded.

At first, Miss Dieaway was very pensive, and vouchsafed merely the most laconic answers to my repeated conversational endeavours; but when I grew silent in my turn, she became more gracious and affable.

"I think it is a mistake of mamma's," said

she, at length, "to be always making ironical and cutting remarks at me and about me."

I have a natural propensity for siding with the absent; an unfortunate one, I think, for I offend thereby those who are present without propitiating those who are away. However that may be, I again spoke this time according to that impulse.

"Perhaps you should not apply too much to yourself any allusions she may make to the misconduct of others."

"Oh! you think that she is quite right, of course."

"I so little think it, my dear Lavinia, that just now, while you were away, I could not but suggest to her a little more caution and forbearance."

"Did you indeed? I wonder what she answered."

"That she was so angry with certain nameless parties, as to render it difficult for her to repress her feelings."

"She has not half so much cause to be angry as I have, and yet I can restrain mine."

"Yes; but you know that children are always wiser than their parents."

Miss Dieway coloured a little, and abruptly changing the subject, said :

"Did she mention anything to you about her plans?"

"Yes; she spoke of a sort of intention to return to town."

"How soon?" asked my companion, with the most unfeigned indifference.

"She has no fixed plan at all as yet. Her departure will depend upon circumstances and the disposition of other people."

"Those other people being one person, I suppose, not very far off now."

"Perhaps so."

"She makes a great mistake though, if she thinks that the return to London will have any such marvellous effect upon me now."

"Then after all, you would as soon remain on quietly here."

"Just as soon for the present."

"I suspect it will rest very much with you,

and I shall have a fair opportunity of judging how far you care to stay with me."

"How so?"

"Simply, because if you show yourself to be tolerably cheerful and satisfied, Lady Edward will scarcely herself feel inclined to move."

"You must not expect to see me in very towering spirits."

"Certainly not; but, if you should appear very much the reverse, I should then feel convinced that you wish to leave me."

"If I wished to leave you, I should say so at once; and then I do not think that we should stay very long here now."

As yet, it was evident that our *tête-à-tête* had not promoted any extraordinary sympathy or tenderness between us. Was Miss Dieaway annoyed that I should have shown myself as usual, rather on the side of her mother than on her's?—was I secretly angry at the utter unconcern which she displayed with respect to her mother's plans? At all events, the result was observed by her as well as by me, for, after another interval of silence, she said—

"Do you know why I wished you just now not to make too favourable a report of the weather to mamma?"

"I imagined that you didn't care to drive with her to-day."

"Just so. I feared she would be tormenting me the whole time."

"Well, you carried your point so far."

"No great thanks to you, as you said pretty much the contrary of what I wished."

"Perhaps I had my own views, and have carried them out also."

"And these were—to drive with me, and torment me instead of mamma."

"No, indeed. I thought the air would do you good, and I wished you to drive without your mother. I had not contemplated at first the annoyance which my society, too, might give."

"It is not your society, but your own free will, which gives the annoyance. I dare say you feel hurt at my not appearing happier to be with you, and sorrier to leave you: but I

can't help that. Whatever may be my faults, and I suppose that I have thousands, I am truthful and sincere—that's all."

"Great qualities those: never part with them. Time and experience will show you whether I, too, have not been a truthful and sincere friend to you. But we are not far from the farm now"

I was labouring under a rather common indisposition, the reaction from my own inordinate anticipations, and I almost wished not only the half but the whole of our drive to be over. Ere the farm was reached, however, I felt a small hand—had it been ungloved for the occasion?—gently laid on mine. Could I resist the mute appeal? or could I respond to it otherwise than by raising it to my lips?

"We really mustn't quarrel, we two, whatever may happen," said Miss Dieaway, softly.

"Were we quarrelling, Vinny?"

"Something very like it."

"Then it must have been my fault."

"No, indeed ; it was mine, all mine—but you must bear with me to-day."

As our eyes here met, I saw that hers were full of tears.

"And so you will forgive me?" muttered she.

"Forgive you, Vinny? Oh, gracious heavens! what a question!"

Poor, forlorn, forsaken child ! How gladly would I have clasped her to my heart for ever—but I was not her father.

We were now fairly at the farm. We had not been there much of late, and summer had wrought great changes on the luxuriant expanse around us. Indeed, now that the rain and the rain-clouds had passed away, leaving nought behind them but the beneficent traces of their passage, methought that I had never seen so enchanting a smile sitting upon the fair face of nature.

"We must not delay too long in the poultry-yard to day," said I to Miss Dieway, when she had fed the clamorous host which had gathered around her. "You will not mind wetting a

little your tiny boots this warm afternoon, and we will walk through the fields together. The thorns have lost their bloom ; but the beans and the clover are pouring forth their evening incense, and we shall see the foremost beauty of the year in its teeming promise."

I led the way, and she followed close, close behind. We spoke seldom, but in Lavinia's present mood, there was nothing of mutinous impatience. She was sad and thoughtful, how could she be otherwise ? but her spirit was communing with all around her, and freely responding to the gentle influences of the hour. Thus we reached a neighbouring eminence, at the summit of which there was a rustic bench under the shade of a portly old oak, and there we sat down together.

" Your feet are not wet, I hope ? " said I.

" Oh, no ! nothing to signify ? "

" And you feel a little revived ? "

" I do indeed. Much more than I could have expected."

“The country has that advantage, in the summer months, that the pure air of Heaven is easily procured.”

“It certainly is.”

For a few moments we both remained silent.

“This is my favourite view,” resumed Miss Dieaway. “At our feet, the pasture lands studded with sheep and cattle; then the dark woods so clearly reflected in the stream; then the lawn, and then the old house struggling into view through the masses of timber around it. I really must make a sketch of it before I go.”

“Pray do. You draw in colours so well, and it will be a memorial of your imprisonment here.”

“I require no such memorial,” said she, softly. “I mean the drawing for your acceptance, if I finish it before I go.”

“I shall gratefully accept it,” said I, taking her hand; “but, Vinny, you must grant me another favour.”

“Certainly.”

“It may appear to you a strange request.”

“Never mind that,” replied she; but oh! how ingenuously!

“I know that we must some day part—perhaps, very soon; but you must not needlessly allude to it beforehand.”

“Well, then, I won’t.”

“You were remarking, just now, how clear was the mirror of that stream beneath us—such, for a short time and fleeting interval, is the present course of my life. But a dark shadow will creep across it at times, so dismal and drear, that the sparkling ripple will grow black as nightfall; a heavy fragment will be hurled upon the shining crystal, and will shiver it into a thousand atoms. Would it not be a sin uselessly to provoke such a revulsion?”

“Undoubtedly; but we are not gone yet. And, if Cammy comes back, we may have some cheerful days again here, in a way.”

“If Lady Cammy returns! Have you any reason to fear that she won’t?”

"I have, indeed. I know that Lord Dreadnought is angry with her for being so long away from London at this time of year"

"Really?"

"And if she happens to meet him at Dreadnought, where he is always running down by the railway, there will be what she calls an awful encounter."

"Well, we must only hope for the best."

"What o'clock, is it?"

A common-place question, enough, that, but alas! how fearfully significant at times, and at that present time.

I answered that it was about half-past five.

"Then perhaps we should return towards home," said she, rising up: "mamma has been too long alone."

We returned accordingly, and, thanks to mutual endeavour and concession on the part of mother and daughter, nothing occurred to ruffle the serenity of the evening. Poor Lavinia played, sang, read the papers, made the tea, did, in short, whatever was required

forcing her to go to London. See yourself," said the disconsolate beauty

I felt some diffidence in taking the proffered letter, for it struck me that Miss Dieaway had scarcely had time to scan it over herself, and I said—

"Am I to read this."

"Certainly; pray do."

As it would be no easy matter to analyse Lady Camilla Dareall's style, perhaps I may as well produce the text itself.

"Dreadnought, Thursday.

"MY OWN VERY DEAR DARLING,

"I have good news and bad news for you. There is no hope for it, so you must cry with one of those extraordinary stars of yours, for they really are not eyes, and laugh with the other. My good news is, that that wretch Walter is actually on his way to the London station with Dauntless; my bad news, that tomorrow, at the same hour, I am to wend my way thither with the Governor. Now for the details.

"When we came home here, yesterday evening, we found nobody but Dauntless. Without entering into any explanations, I made him aware that he must positively take charge of Walter for some time. 'All right,' says he; 'I'm agreeable. He shall trundle up with me to-morrow to see the Kickson.' 'What on earth is that?' says I. 'The new dancer to be sure,' says he. 'Emma Kickson—native talent, smallest foot in London. He'll soon get under way when he hears of her.' And safe enough, my darling Vinny, while I was playing on the piano, later in the evening, what did I overhear but the two odious monsters talking over the shape and performance of this horrible creature, and vowing that, this very evening, they would be throwing bouquets to her. Accordingly, this morning at breakfast, Walter pulls out of his pocket an old law-paper, written several ages before the Creation, which, as he tells me, 'wenders his pwersence in London quite necessawy.' 'Don't neglect business for the

world,' replied I ; and there's an end of him.
Now for my case.

" My dear, at no hour at all this morning,
I was awoke by a tremendous noise out of doors.
Up I spring and begin screaming ' fire ' most
lustily. ' Where the —— is the fire ? ' shouts
up from the terrace old Dreadnought himself.

" ' How can I tell ? ' said I, from the window;
' it is just what I want to know.' ' Hallo !
Cammy, Cammy,' cries he, ' what in the
name of five-hundred thousand Russians are
you doing there ? ' ' Well I am, or I was
taking my natural rest when the row about
the fire broke out ; for there must be a fire
somewhere or there couldn't have been such
a row.' ' Nonsense ! What row was there,
but my explanations with the garden-boys for
being so late at their work. They didn't ex-
peet me up by the night-train, but they'll find
that I am a match for them. And so will you
too ; by the way, Miss Cammy, I have a word
for your private ear also.' Well, my dear,
scarcely had I had time to jump into bed

again, when in he stalks. What an old Tartar it is to be sure. If he hasn't at least a division under his command, he don't know what on earth to do with himself from morning till night. However, down he sits at the foot of my bed and falls to at once. What in the name of Menschikoff I was doing out of London all the season—and where I had been—and what about—and how I was ever to get married at this rate, and the Lord knows what else—out it all came. Of course, I attempted some explanation, and then he asked what sort of person Calcraft was, and if he would do—upon which I screeched—and then why Walter wouldn't do—upon which I screeched still worser. So that finally he said, catching his opportunity by the forelock in no figurative strain. ‘At all events, I have caught you now, you little jilt, and back to town you pack with me to-morrow, or my name isn't Dreadnought.’ ‘No, I shan't,’ says I. ‘Won't you?’ says he; ‘We shall see.’ ‘So we shall see,’ says I. ‘I am pledged

to return to Vinny.' 'And I am pledged to take you to town.' In short, my dearest child, a regular skrimmage ensued, and you never saw a man in such a rage as he fell into. I really thought, one moment, that he would be running for the switch of other days, with which poor Cammy used to be made to knock under at last, though she always showed a pretty good fight first, to do her justice. The upshot is that, if I don't give in, I am to be strapped down in an imperial, then locked up, and thus taken ; so that, I suppose, I had better go at once in the more accredited fashion.

"And now, my own dear darling, I see nothing for it, but that you should come to town as quickly as you can yourself, and we will try and forget all our miseries on the light, fantastic toe. I am sorry for poor Calcraft, who will miss us both, particularly me—eh ? but why should he not run up, too, and take a whirl or so in the gay vortex. It would be the making of him ; tell him so from

me, with kind remembrances. Give my best respects, also, to Aunt E. : she mustn't hate me any more after my late achievements. As to you, my inestimable treasure, I could roast an ox with the burning of my heart for you, so don't keep me waiting and pining in town, but come up smartly to

“ Your ever-loving

“ CAMMY.”

“ There is no use expecting her back here,” said Miss Dieaway, mournfully, when she saw that I had read the whole effusion through.

“ None at all, I fear.”

“ Let me look over what she says again,” continued she, extending her hand for the letter.

I could not but observe Lavinia's countenance as she studied more attentively each line and word, and I was not much surprised to see her of a sudden colour very deeply.

“ My gracious ! ” exclaimed she, “ how can I ever have shown you this letter, without having read it over more carefully myself !

Dear Cammy does write such extraordinary things."

"Are you alluding, Vinny, to her first screech?"

"Perhaps I am. You must not be offended," continued she, artlessly enough; "it does not mean—in short, I do not know what to say."

"And yet I should like very much to know what you wished to express."

"I dare say you would. Well, all I can say is, that when Walter was mentioned too, who is quite young and good-looking, and all that sort of thing, Cammy shrieked louder still, so that—after all—"

"After all," inquired I, coming to her assistance, "there might still be some little chance for me."

"I didn't mean that, you know it very well," replied she, laughing. "I merely didn't wish you to think that anything at all disparaging to you was intended, though you are much too sensible to take offence. Now, if we go to London, I wonder is there any probability of your following us."

"No Lavinia ; not the slightest."

"Then you see," said she, rather timidly, "though it is I who will be leaving you, we shall be separated as much by your determination, as by mine."

"That is a point of casuistry, Miss Vinny, which I must leave you to settle with your conscience."

"My conscience will be clear enough," answered she, smiling, "as I shall always do what mamma wishes."

"Yes ; but your mamma will only do what she thinks you wish, so that you cannot escape from the responsibility of the decision. I shall easily see by your countenance and bearing, during the next few days, whether at heart you wish to go or stay."

"I am but a poor actress," said she, "and my countenance and bearing, as you call them, will only reveal what is going on within. However, if we do go, I shall be sorrier to leave you than you think."

"We shall see all about that when the time

comes. At all events, you will answer no purpose by starving yourself, so pray have a little breakfast now."

Miss Dieaway's manner during the following days was very much such as the former portion of her concluding observations might have led me to anticipate. There was no studied effort to appear either cheerful or sad. She felt depressed, and she looked depressed—she felt lonely and she looked lonely. Had I expected any strenuous endeavour on her part to dissemble her more sorrowful feelings, with a view to influence thereby her mother's determination, I should have been disappointed; but happily I was well prepared. I am but doing justice to Lady Edward in saying that, whenever she was with us, and that was now during the principal parts of each day and evening, she seemed intently bent upon conjecturing, from her daughter's appearance, whether the balance of probable benefit to her spirits was to be struck in favour of London or of the country. Her conclusion was such

as any parent or indeed any observer would most naturally have come to—that a change was desirable. When I told Miss Dieaway that her mother's opinion seemed inclining that way, she showed neither surprise nor satisfaction, but, as it were, resigned herself more than ever to her fate. When I was the first to inform her that a day for her departure was actually talked of, she received the intelligence with the same listless mien. When I announced to her that a day was positively fixed she made no observation whatever. It approached—it drew near—and no change could I discern. The interval was now to be reckoned by hours only. Were we two thus to part? Why not? What had I to say? And yet we did not part thus without one word of congenial farewell.

During the memorable evening which preceded the departure, Lavinia seemed to exert herself more than had been her wont of late. She took a prominent share in the conversation; she played; she read the papers; she evi-

dently did her utmost to contend against the mournful feeling which appeared to pervade our very atmosphere. At half-past nine, her mother arose and said—

“ You need not hurry, Vinny ; but Charles will kindly excuse me if I leave him so early. He knows that, with me, the getting under way is no slight matter. I only say good-night, as we shall meet to-morrow morning.”

We were alone together.

At first, Miss Dieaway remained sitting opposite to me, her eyes fixed in deep abstraction upon the fireplace. I had seen her before now in the self-same attitude, and buried thus in the same deep arm-chair. It was on the day of her arrival, and of our first unpropitious conversation. What a world to me of internal adventure during that interval ! How mournfully would Fancy labour to retrace all that to mortal senses was now spent, past and gone. Yet not quite past either—there she was still for to-night ; but where to-morrow ?

At length, as if suddenly recollecting her-

self, Miss Dieaway arose, and tripping lightly to the other end of the room, returned with a sheet of paper in her hand.

"I have something for you here, Sir Charles," said she.

"Indeed?"

"Cannot you guess what it is?"

"Perhaps I could partly, but I thought that you had forgotten your promise."

"Well, the more shame for you. I have been out for more than an hour before breakfast, during the last four mornings, to complete the sketch. I wonder what you will think of it."

I examined the performance, and exclaimed, in all sincerity :

"This is no sketch, Lavinia, but a remarkably pretty drawing, Is it really for me?"

"Certainly, if you will accept of it. You know it represents, or is meant to represent, my favourite view of Rockingham Hall. I wish you to keep it also," continued she, as a memorial of the walk we took that way on the

day—in short, the day that I promised you the sketch."

"So there was something particularly memorable you think, Vinny, in that day and in that walk."

"That day was an important one, at all events in my history ; and, as to the walk, it was then, for the first time, that it struck me—"

"Pray go on ; remember that what you leave unexplained to-night must long remain so to me. What was it that struck you so particularly during that walk ? "

"Well, then, I had been very cross to you at first—there was nothing so uncommon in that, to be sure—and you had been, as usual, very good-natured and forbearing ; but there was something more than that—at least, so I fancied. It appeared to me then, for the first time, that you spoke to me with the tenderness ——"

"Of a father, Vinny ?"

"Why, you know best," resumed she ; "but that was not quite what I was going to say."

"What was it, then, that you really meant?"

"I meant—with the tenderness of true, genuine sympathy. And I am one of those upon whom such sympathy is not thrown away."

"I was not aware, Vinny, that what I feel for you was betrayed more on that occasion than on any other."

"I fancied that you spoke with particular earnestness, and you also. But no, this is too ridiculous," added she. "There is the drawing, and I hope that you will keep it for my sake."

"I will, Vinny, and treasure it too; but I must know what more I said to you on that day."

"I did not tell you that you had said anything more."

"Then it was something I did? You surely won't refuse to tell me, if I entreat you, on this our last evening?"

"Well, but you can remember, as well as I can, though you are such a very old man."

"Let me see. I can recollect your laying this little fairy hand upon mine, and that I took it thus, and raised it to my lips."

"Oh no! pray don't," cried my companion, almost alarmed.

"Is there any harm, Vinny, in kissing this little hand?"

"I suppose not, since you did it once before," was the confiding reply; "but really, Sir Charles, I would rather not."

"Then I will not, Vinny, if it consents to remain for a short time a gentle, unresisting prisoner within mine. I should have a strange tale to tell you, if you would listen to it, but will you hear it?"

She looked at the clock; it marked only a quarter to ten, and she replied, with every semblance of ingenuousness:

"Mamma would be very angry with me if I left you before ten o'clock, at soonest."

"Then you must remain, Vinny," concluded

I. "But, indeed, I have nothing to say which could not equally be said if your mother were here."

"Oh! I make no doubt," exclaimed she, blushing, "but that is no reason—"

"No reason, Vinny?"

"Never mind; pray go on with your tale."

What could she have meant? But I paused not to inquire, for my heart was full—as full—fuller than it had been for many a long day, and it spoke beyond the control of judgment and of reflection.

"You wish me to keep this drawing, Vinny, because it recalls one particular place, one particular hour of our intercourse; but what are they to me, beyond every moment that has been blessed by your presence, beyond every inch of ground which has been hallowed by your footstep?"

The imprisoned hand trembled within mine, and would have freed itself, but I detained it more firmly.

"For three long years, the sunshine of my life was withdrawn. I had deemed that never again would my vision rest, with the enchantment of the past, upon all that I had most worshipped of yore. You appeared; the long night-cloud vanished, and all around was radiance and rapture again."

I paused for a moment. She did not look up, but she softly murmured—

"Then you should be grateful to those who have wrought this wonderful change."

"No, Vinny," replied I, fiercely, "I cannot—I will not. Would it be mercy to drag the prisoner from his dungeon, for one glorious midsummer's day, and then to consign him to it again? Would it be kindness to restore to the blind man the forfeited treasure of his eyesight, for one gorgeous hour, and then to plunge him into darkness once more? Ten-fold drearier to those would be that hopeless nightfall—and such a one awaits me even now."

Again I paused.

"Why should you not follow us to London?" was the gentle inquiry. "You cannot but feel lonely sometimes all alone here."

"Loneliness is no enviable condition, Vinny," replied I; "but there are sufferings far greater in this life. I was alluding just now to the dreariness of the dungeon and of the nightshade, where no genial ray can ever solace or cheer; but the sun does not merely cheer and solace. When I was younger, I might have been reckoned among his most fervent worshippers. I roamed far and wide in search of the land where his morning rays find their earliest resting-place, and then I learned what terrors lurk in his smile. I have seen how he can scorch the soil of the desert into parching sand, and convert into a raving maniac the healthful traveller who did but sport with his noontide splendour. Yes, terrible, no less than beautiful, is this radiant lord of our system; we may pine for his absent beams, but we must not defy them."

Once more I paused.

“ Could not this figurative sun be taught how to cheer and not to scorch ?”

“ No, Vinny ; at least, not by me. His deadlier powers are as inherent to him as the more beneficent and none, doubtless, is more unconscious of their sway than he is. The Parsee, who is prostrate in the dust before him, cannot imagine that his eternal course will be arrested, or his effulgence tempered by the passing prayer of a mortal.”

“ Why then does he worship him ?”

“ Because our nature is so frail and so weak, Lavinia, that the unbidden cry of adoration will burst from our lips at the sight of all that is, beyond our usual standard, splendid, exalted and powerful. We worship not always to demand and to obtain ; the relief to our overstrained feelings is often the only need we require. Such homage as this will frequently be poured forth at your feet ; and you need only smile, as you do now, in sorrowing astonishment, while you restore to its resting place some truant curl.”

"I shall seldom hear homage offered to me in such language as this," was the thoughtful reply. "But you are a poet," added she, with a slight smile, "and can express more warmly than you feel."

"Were I in truth a poet, Vinny, I should not, on that account, speak more warmly than I feel. I should only convey, more truthfully and more vividly, perhaps, what all men have at some time felt. But I know how safely I can address you. Believe me, Lavinia, I have not forgotten Lady Camilla's warning."

"She spoke on her own account, you know, when she needlessly wounded your feelings on that day," was the gentle observation uttered here.

"Perhaps she did; but, still, you will not gainsay the theme and substance of her caution."

I paused for no reply here, but resumed at once:

"You were saying that my homage was proffered to my figurative sun in unusual

terms ; it may be so, indeed, for I am in no ordinary frame of mind on this our last evening. Perhaps the words that come free and straight from the heart may fall more strangely than others upon the ear ; but what would it avail if mine were endowed with a far-surpassing charm ? Do you remember how, when we were walking all together the other night, we heard the song of the nightingale ?"

"I do, well."

" You seemed much pleased, and delayed some time to hear it more fully. You said, how charming it would be to have one at home in a cage ; and you inquired whether his plumage were as beautiful as his notes. I told you that he was plain and unadorned enough in his outward appearance, and then, you talked no more of cherishing him as your favourite."

" Did not Cammy also say that he would not sing in a cage, or if kept to sing at home ?"

" She did, I believe, and as much might be said, no doubt, of many a creature of song.

But that would have no decisive bearing upon the question, for a day or two afterwards you heard that one of the keepers, while firing at a hawk, had broken, with a stray grain of shot, the wing of a goldfinch. You asked to see him—he was brought to you, and, though he cannot sing, how wild were your exclamations of endearment."

"I could not but feel for the poor little wounded creature."

"No doubt; but the sympathy was not all for the wound. The beauty of the form and the plumage were not unnoticed when he was told that he was to be your cherished companion even in London."

"It was Cammy who said that I ought to take him to town, as I had no Billy of my own."

"It matters not; you both followed there, not an impulse but a law of your nature. And woe to those who would disregard it!—woe to those who would forget that youth flies to youth and beauty to beauty! I will not fol-

low you to London, my figurative sun, to be scorched by the smile which you will bestow upon your first-met admirer."

"I have none now," was the murmured objection.

"How long will you lack them, Lavinia, when you are once more a leading star of the London ball-rooms? Will you write to me sometimes, Vinny, when we shall be far asunder?"

"I will, sometimes, if you wish it."

"It will be a great kindness; and you must do something more at my request."

"What may that be?"

"Never, after to-night, give a thought to the folly that I have uttered here."

"It will not be so easily forgotten."

"Well, then, you may occasionally remember it, but never let it weigh a feather hereafter in any important decision you may have to take. Youth and beauty—even such as yours—will not endure for ever; and a day will come, at length, when your chief plea-

sure may be to remember the conquests of the past. It will be but the truth, Lavinia, should the name of your lonely kinsman recur on the list."

I paused once more for a moment, and the clock struck. My companion seemed startled, and I could not but exclaim myself—

"Who would have thought that it was already so late?"

"Mamma will scarcely scold me to-night for leaving you too soon."

"Perhaps I ought to release you now, Vinny?"

"Well, I have a long journey before me to-morrow; but you will not accuse me of having hurried away from you on our last evening."

"No, in truth; but my tale is concluded, and I must detain you no more. Good night!"

I pressed my lips to her hand. She glided away, and I was alone again.

CHAPTER XI.

WE were three at breakfast on the following morning, for Lady Edward, having been warned by the imperious time-table that an early departure was requisite, had resigned herself, in familiar parlance, to make a day of it. Each of us remained tolerably silent and oppressed by the spirit of the hour, and the few observations exchanged had no direct bearing on the subject of our mutual thoughts.

“ You will start us in time, Charles ? ” said my cousin, when the appointed hour was drawing near.

“ I will. You have at least five minutes yet.”

"I am sorry that you do not come with us as far as the station."

"So am I indeed; but I have studied the question, and I find that, between maids, servants, and packages, you will be more comfortable without me. At all events, we must have parted to-day."

"Not for long, I trust, Charles. Remember that I positively expect you in London."

I shook my head and replied—

"You will not see me there."

"Nonsense, nonsense. A week's solitary reflection here will suggest a very different view of the case."

"I doubt it, Emily."

Mr. Redhill here entered and solemnly informed the ladies that it was time to go.

"Very well," said Lady Edward. "Just run to my room, Vinny, and see that nothing is forgotten, while Charles puts on my shawl."

My cousin was evidently very sorry to leave me, but her feelings were not of a nature to bid defiance to the more ordinary forms of

expression. My farewell was, therefore, exchanged in rather common-place terms with her, and with Vinny, when she returned, in no terms at all.

The greatest events in our life are not always attended with much pomp and circumstance, and so it was in this case; but, in truth, Lavinia and I had already parted on the previous evening. As she stepped lightly into the carriage after her mother, when I had, for the last time, pressed her hand, I could observe that her face was averted; but for what reason I could only conjecture. The carriage rolled on, and the lonely inheritor of Rockingham Hall was restored to his seclusion of the past.

I attempted to imagine myself extremely busy on that morning; but, as the sight of the house and of the gardens was more than I could endure at first, I rode off to the farm, and made myself very conspicuous there, by my attention to the minutest details. Still, when the workmen's dinner-bell rang, I could

not in conscience proceed with my criticisms, so I strayed away where fancy led me. And where could she lead, saving to the spot where Lavinia and I had wandered, and sat on the day which she had herself pronounced to be a memorable one in her existence? There we had walked, there we had reposed together;—and now that I struggled no longer to forget—now that the vain contest to repel her ever returning image was at an end, why should I forsake any longer our usual haunts? Why should I not revel in the sadness that absorbed me? Perhaps, after all would it expend itself more freely thus.

In this mood, I returned slowly towards the shrubbery, and even to the gardens. There, the most trifling objects around were vivid with the enchantment of the past—that past which, scarcely could I credit it now, had, in truth, been a part of this my homely and mortal existence. The weather was somewhat in harmony with my feelings: it was soft and very warm. Rain had fallen in the night, and even

now a dull heavy cloud would occasionally darken the glowing sunshine, but not for very long.

Such being my frame of mind, I kept no very accurate account with space or with time, and it was later in the day, no doubt, than I imagined when, retracing my steps towards the house, I turned one of the sharpest corners of the shrubbery walk. Gracious Heavens! what a vision. Is my reason gone?

"Do not be alarmed!" cried Lavinia, earnestly; "a dreadful accident has occurred, but not to any of us. What have you heard?"

"Nothing at all."

"Nothing at all yet? We were so afraid that some exaggerated rumour might reach you. But why, then, did you look so dreadfully startled and alarmed when you saw me?"

"Because, at best, we are poor, weak creatures, who can be overpowered even by joy, when it is too sudden and ineffable. Tell me what has occurred."

"I trust that I have acted for the best, but mamma and Clarges were both so hysterical as to be utterly helpless; and, when the train had fairly started without us, the station-master urged me very much to return here for rest and for advice. It must, indeed, have been an awful sight for those who beheld the whole of it."

"You have not yet told me, Vinny, what did occur."

"No more I have. Well, we were in full time for the London train, so we waited on the platform; and, as mamma preferred remaining there, two civil-spoken young men, who were waiting also, entered into conversation with her, and procured her a chair and a stool. Suddenly, the down-express, as they call it, and which does not stop at the station, passed by us at an awful rate. I was at the time looking at the Railway Library books, on the stall, when I heard the most terrible shrieks. It would appear that one of the young men had had the folly to bet, when the

express was close at hand, that he would cross the line before it passed. In the attempt, his foot slipped, the whole train went over him, and his mangled body had to be dragged out just under poor mamma's very eyes. You can fancy what she went through; and, as any lengthened exertion to-day is out of the question for her, I am sure that you will approve of my having brought her back here."

"I do, more than I can say, Vinny. Have you sent for Dr. Evans yet?"

"I have; mamma has such confidence in him, that I trust she will soon be herself again, when she has seen him."

"It must have been a very fearful sight for one so sensitive."

"Yes, indeed; and to think that the unfortunate young man was actually speaking to her a few seconds before."

"I wonder that you did not faint yourself, Vinny."

"I verily believe I should, if I had been nearer at the time, and not had mamma to

look after. As it was, though, I was terribly frightened, nearly as much so as you were just now, when you saw me. I am afraid that you will think us almost as intrusive as Walter and Cammy. Still, I could not well do otherwise."

"So nothing but compulsion has brought you back?"

"I did not say that I was sorry to return. Indeed, when all was settled, I felt almost curious to find out how you were getting on without us. I am sure that there was sunshine enough for you this morning, though we were away."

"Was there? It had no radiance, it had no glow for me."

"You certainly did look a little desolate when I first saw you, and then, when you perceived me, so dreadfully alarmed."

"Very much as our friend the Parsee would show, I suppose, Vinny, if, in the midst of his invocations, he were to observe the sun forsaking his sphere and approaching

him. But I must not talk this nonsense to you now."

"Is it more reprehensible in the afternoon than in the evening?"

"Not exactly, perhaps; but last night, you know, Vinny, was a privileged one, and can form no precedent in our intercourse. Besides, if your mother is ill, you are more than ever under my protection. Do you think that she will see me?"

"When we get home, I can run up and ask her."

We found, however, on reaching the house, that Dr. Evans was already there, and closeted once more with the invalid. When he came down, he told me that the alarm had, to the best of his judgment, brought on an attack of jaundice, which might require, for some little time, rest and specific treatment. I, therefore, requested Vinny merely to assure her mother how delighted I was at their return, without mentioning any wish on my part to intrude upon her.

We met no more before dinner-time, but, when the second bell rang, it was a strange revolution, indeed, to see my Hebe tripping down again to share and illumine my solitude. Though extremely gentle and retiring in her manner, Vinny has no shyness. Her natural easy and graceful self-possession has been well confirmed by her early intercourse with society, and the general homage she has there met with from the first. This I had observed more than once before ; but I could not but admire, on the present occasion, the dignified yet playful unconcern with which she resumed her seat at my side. Her elastic spirits had evidently soon recovered from the agitation of the morning ; she spoke of her mother's condition as most annoying, but leaving no grounds for anxiety ; and, upon the whole, she showed more like her former self than I had seen her since the departure of her friends.

“ I am afraid that you will lose the remains of your London season, Lavinia,” said I, after the servants had left us.

"I suppose so; but I don't mean to cry about it," was the reply. "I am sorry for Cammy though. Dear me! what a state she will be in when she hears of the put off."

"Have you written to her?"

"Of course I have; both from the station and from here."

"Now, what shall I do to amuse you?"

"You will be clever if you manage that—still, I do not mean to be more unhappy than can be helped. In the first place, there are the gardens which I worship—then I must practise a great deal on the piano, that is when you are out of the way—then, I was thinking of one or two things, but I do not know if I can tell you."

"Pray do."

"Well, it has struck me lately that I am terribly ignorant. Don't you think so?"

"No, not particularly so."

"Not particularly so! That is pretty well, I dare say. Now, you know that, in a London party, or with such people as Cammy

and poor Walter, it really does not signify at all what one knows or does not know. If one can but talk of the last opera; or the best *couturière*, one gets on, or one gets off pretty well. But, with sensible, intellectual people, I am soon brought to feel my deficiency, and to lament it."

"Particularly with such a mind as yours, Lavinia, always aspiring for what is exalted."

"Just so," said she, laughing, "and with such a taste, besides, for appreciating good poetry."

"Decidedly."

"Seriously, however," continued she, "when I read the *Times* to you of an evening, which I suppose I am to continue doing occasionally, I am perfectly bewildered at my ignorance of the commonest expressions. Shares, dividends, debentures, stock, scrip, consignments, &c., are expressions which I may repeat often enough, but which convey no distinct idea to my mind."

"I can easily explain them all to you, Vinny."

"That is just what I would so much wish. Then there is all the parliamentary phraseology about bills, and notices, and readings, and committees, and committals."

"Very soon disposed of, also."

"Then there is astronomy, and what do they call it—cosm—cosm—"

"Cosmography?"

"Exactly. Cammy, who was two years at school, has it all at her fingers' ends. She can tell you how far the moon is, how quick the earth goes, and all about the tides and the eclipses, the longitude, and the latitude, while I am very soon puzzled. I suppose that I might get to know it all in time?"

"I should hope so indeed, Lavinia, with your intelligence and a little application. Then there is Greek, Latin and Hebrew."

"No, no; how provoking you are! All that is quite beyond me, of course, but there are the principal French authors with whom I would like more than I can say to be better acquainted. They are so often quoted."

"And they will well repay the perusal."

"Now, you know," resumed she, "that I must be a good deal with mamma; but she will also be constantly sending me to you to make myself sociable and agreeable. And if you will but allow me, when I am not playing or drawing, to read either to you or near you, so as to apply to you in my difficulties, I am sure that I shall make wonderful progress. This is my first request."

"And it is most readily granted, as well as the second."

"Don't be in a hurry: have you any conception what the second is to be?"

"Not the most remote."

"Well, Cammy rides so beautifully and I should so much like—"

"To ride?"

"Exactly; but that would be too troublesome."

"Not at all. My mare, *Midnight*, has carried a lady, and you would find her perfectly steady and quiet."

"But what would you ride?"

“Either of the hacks would do perfectly for me.”

“Some men hate riding with a lady.”

“You will not find that to be the case with me.”

“You really are too kind; but I must go now and see after mamma.”

“Do; but you will return, will you not?”

“Certainly, if you wish it.”

“And play me a tune?”

“As many as you please.”

In due course of time, she did return; she played to me during nearly an hour of enchantment, and then, at her own request, she read me the papers, pausing for an explanation at every expression she did not clearly understand.

Did all this occur upon our mortal earth? Yes; for, at eleven, the vision was withdrawn, and I was alone and myself again.

On the following morning, Lavinia was in the breakfast-room before me, and she soon resumed our conversation of the previous evening.

"I have told mamma of our great plans," said she.

"About the riding?"

"Yes, about the riding, which she very much approves, and also about all the information I am to acquire from you, which she approves of still more. Our chief difficulty will be to make the day long enough."

"We could begin it earlier, if you like, Vinny. Shall we breakfast half-an-hour sooner?"

"Let us say a quarter of an hour, that I may be sure to be punctual."

"Very well, a quarter of an hour; and the dinner—shall we put it off a little?"

"What do you think?"

"I really have no wish but yours."

"Then, as the days are so long now, shall we say eight o'clock?"

"By all means."

"Well, that will give us a respectable day. Mamma must have four hours at least."

"Certainly."

“As much as possible, two in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening.”

“Very good.”

“I suppose we ought to be more precise still, so as not to interfere with your occupations.”

“Perhaps so, for regularity is the soul of business.”

“Then, let me see. I could play to you for an hour after breakfast whilst you are reading your papers.”

“Excellent.”

“I could go to mamma from eleven till one, during part of which time I could draw.”

“Very good.”

“Shall we still have luncheon at one?”

“Certainly, if you approve.”

“After luncheon, we could read together till three, I could return to mamma till four, and then we should have more than three hours before us for riding, driving, or garden-

ing. Then, for the evening, I could be with mamma from nine till ten, and with you from ten till eleven."

"Nothing could be better laid out; but, perhaps, Lady Edward will see me too sometimes, in the evening."

"Only then, I suspect," replied Vinny, "so long as she is in her present state. Certainly, this horrible jaundice does alter one frightfully."

"Shall we commence carrying out our new arrangements this very day?"

"By all means, Sir Charles."

She accordingly played to me till eleven o'clock; I then mounted my mare, and exercised her properly. After luncheon, at my eager pupil's request, I produced an elementary treatise upon astronomy, which, with its corresponding globes, figures, and projections, had remained tolerably undisturbed for no little time in its corner of the library. Swiftly, indeed, flew by the allotted hour for this portion of our day's work, during which nothing could

exceed Lavinia's intelligence and assiduity. At four, she re-appeared in a charming equestrian toilette, which had been ordered for some lessons that she had taken at a riding-school, during the winter. Here also I found a pupil as promising as she was docile, evincing no sign of fear, and managing her horse with remarkable gentleness and dexterity. Our first ride was naturally a short one; but the remainder of the beautiful summer's afternoon was not thrown away upon us in the garden, where the earlier efforts of my fair visitors had produced a blaze of flowers, such as had never been concentrated there before. For an hour again, in the evening, I was forsaken by my companion; but she punctually returned at the appointed time, when she played, and read the papers to me, alternately, until the clock struck eleven.

Such was the first day of my renewed intercourse with Lavinia, and such were those that ensued, so far as the weather and other circumstances would admit. Ever mindful of the

confidence reposed in me by the mother and the daughter, I did not suffer myself to be betrayed again into the unguarded strain of our parting evening, but continued to act the paternal monitor to the best of my abilities.

CHAPTER XII.

IN due course of time, Miss Dieaway received her friend's answer to her letters stating the cause of the delay in her return to London. Though it was not until later that it came into my possession, as everything proceeding from Lady Camilla Dareall is well worthy of immediate attention and respect, it shall find its place here.

"MY VERY DEAR TREASURE,

" What a business to be sure ! If you did but know the excitement into which I had worked myself at the thoughts of seeing you again, and the revulsion produced by the

disappointment, you would feel twice more for me than for the late lamented who was prematurely destroyed at the railway station. You must be a pair of something very warm and soft to have turned back, on that account, as if that could have done him any good, poor fellow. I can't but think there must have been some other little lurking motive, but into that it would be 'indisweet,' as Walter says, to inquire.

"That we shall meet before long, my darling duck, I cannot doubt ; but, as you insist upon knowing at once all that I have been about, I suppose I must gratify you by a small preliminary insight into my important concerns. First and foremost, then, I have had another terrific encounter, or rather a series of skirmishes, with the Governor. Whether from seeing the sparring between me and Lady D. more active than ever, or from native infirmity of temper, or from some other cause, he has been pleased to be more impatient than usual respecting my forlorn condition. He began

by setting Lady D. to work upon me, and she opened, in great style, about the advanced period of the season, &c. I replied that I was so very happy at home, thanks to her kindness, that I had not the slightest wish to leave it. ‘Still,’ said she, ‘opportunities should not be neglected and thrown away, and all men require a little encouragement.’ ‘I was not aware,’ I answered, ‘that I was over bashful, but we live to learn.’ ‘It is not by romps and hoydens that men are captivated,’ said she, ‘so much as by an engaging and insinuating manner.’ I observed that, ‘with her example before me, I should learn to do better;’ upon which she got very red, then very white, and said if I were impertinent she would send me out of the room; whereupon I laughed immoderately, and thus ended our dialogue. I suppose it was reported to my lord; for, on the following morning, I was ordered into the study, where I found him, looking like the veriest old lion you ever saw. Our conversation was very much in this

wise :—‘Cammy, mind what I am going to say.’ ‘All right, sir. May I sit down?’ ‘Certainly not. Do you know how old you are?’ ‘Something over twenty, sir, I believe.’ ‘And don’t you think it time to reflect seriously upon —? you know what I mean, as well as I do.’ ‘Really, sir, thanks to your kindness, I am so very happy at home —’ ‘Now don’t come and try that nonsense over me; I won’t stand it. Is anything going on?’ ‘Nothing at all, sir.’ ‘Is there any prospect?’ ‘Not the slightest, that I know of.’ ‘Well then, in the name of ten thousand Yankees, how is it to end?’ ‘I haven’t the slightest conception, sir. Will you try advertising me in the *Times*? ’ ‘Nonsense. I really can’t understand it: you have a very good face—you have a capital figure—Dauntless says they all like you very much—I am willing to make the twenty thousand twenty-five, out of the prize-money, and here we stand just as we did this time last year. There must be some want of management on your part.’

'Tell me, then, what I am to do, sir, and I will do it. I can't propose to them, you know; and if I did, they would begin to cry, run off to their ma's, and I should see no more of them. They are such a set—arn't they now? I have heard you say so yourself twenty times.' 'Well, they are, to be sure; but still it is amongst them you must choose, and not be throwing away your opportunities, as I am assured you are. Come, will you be a good girl for once in a way?' 'Yes.' 'Ah! this is more like business.' Is there no one among all these people about you that you feel —— in short, you feel you could be happy with?'

"I was determined to serve him out, the old Tartar, for keeping me standing before him all this time, and so I did, didn't I just?

"Indeed, sir,' replied I, like the actresses, 'you really do—' 'What?' 'You really do put such questions to a poor girl.' 'Didn't you promise to tell me the truth? Is there

no one that we could look up and invite a little, and for whom you feel you could take a fancy?' 'As you are so pressing, sir, perhaps I should admit that there are—' 'The plural, come, that's all right.' 'That there are two people in London, with whom I could live till Doomsday, without being either sick or sorry.' 'That's the time of day; but, I say, real gentlemen, I hope?' 'I should hope so, too—regular out andouters. One of them is an earl, and the other is a viscount.' 'That ought to do. Now for the names.' 'The names, sir? oh, dear! the names, really?' 'Cammy!' 'Well, sir, don't kill me, and I'll tell you; but you know we poor girls, really—I can only whisper it in your ear. One is the Earl—the Earl of Dreadnought.' He seized me by a ringlet, and cried. 'You had better mind what you are about, you jade. Who's the other?' 'The other is—oh, dear! Viscount Dauntless.'

"This time, my darling, my unfortunate lock got such a pulling, that I couldn't but

scream. ‘Did I hurt you?’ said he, rather alarmed. ‘Of course, you did ; the Darealls don’t sing out for nothing. And all this because I said that I liked my pa and my brother better than anybody in the world. Why are there no such men as you about, and I would soon make up my mind, if they would but have me.’ ‘Well, there is something in that,’ exclaimed his lordship, rather pacified ; ‘tis a pity, to be sure, that I can’t make out for you a respectable military man of some standing in the army, who could take care of you, and keep you in order, both. Let me see : there’s Elkington, Lieutenant-General, Colonel of the 130th Foot, Waterloo and Peninsular man. He’d do, wouldn’t he ?’

“ Did you ever hear, Vinny dear, of such an old—never mind what—to look me in the face and make such a proposition as that ? I, however, showed myself amazingly deferential, and merely said that I should be too proud, of course, though I should not like, to be sure, living quite so much at Buxton, as he was

obliged to do. And then I asked his lordship, quite cursorily, whether he had seen the hero mount his horse lately. ‘No—’ ‘Then let my hair go and I will show you how he does it.’ Well, my dear, I took a chair and gave such a representation of the Waterloo-man trying to get into his saddle, that off pa went into a fit of laughter, which actually threatened to throttle him. Upon this, a considerable improvement took place in our relations, and we ended by a sort of compromise. The upshot thereof was, that Lord Yachtrove, son of the old Marquis of Brownwood, and who is supposed to be inclined to settle down, should be invited to dine here on Wednesday next, that I should, to use his lordship’s phrase, mind what I was about on that day, and so the matter now stands.

“Would you believe it, my own dear darling, I sat down this morning vowing that nothing should prevent me from writing you if not a long letter, still a real handsome one ; and so often have I been interrupted, that the

post-hour has come upon me before I have had time to say one quarter of what I had in store. However, please God, it will keep ; so, with kindest love to Lady E., and most disrespectful compliments to Calcraft,"

"I must remain, for to-day,

"Your ever devoted,

"CAMMY DAREALL."

I should, doubtless, have stated above that the foregoing letter came quite confidentially to my knowledge ; so much so, indeed, that had I the slightest apprehension that this record of my homely existence could ever, by any chance, meet the public eye, no consideration could have impelled me to introduce it here. As much may be said of many subsequent effusions from the same exalted source. However, having been once allowed to read them, I suppose I should be less excusable for having forgotten them, than for remembering them ; and if they were to dwell in my memory, why should they not be inscribed in this simple and most private chronicle of my

innermost feelings and thoughts? Indeed, so even was the tenour of my daily life at this moment, so solicitous was I that nothing in the shape of an incident should occur in my actual intercourse with Miss Dieaway, that, had it not been for these very communications, this period would hardly have afforded anything whatsoever to register. Unfortunately, having said thus much, it now occurs to me that if I said no more, it might be inferred that I was indebted to Miss Vinny herself for the insight I thus obtained into her friend's most secret and private concerns. As nothing could be further from the truth, perhaps I had better state at once how I became acquainted at all with these letters. And I do trust, should ever anyone be so ill advised as to open my drawer and peer into this manuscript, that he will not allow the matter to go any further. The facts of the case are simply these—that Miss Dieaway, being often at a loss how to amuse her mother, would, more or less prudently, leave these letters in her

hands ; and that Lady Edward would, more or less discreetly, but for reasons of her own, never fail to impart them to me. So much for the accurate knowledge I invariably obtained of their contents. As to the documents themselves having eventually come into my possession, I could only account for it by anticipating so immeasurably, that the matter must needs rest, for the present, a mere subject of conjecture.

Having observed before that these same letters of Lady Camilla Dareall formed the chief, if not the only incidents of our untroubled existence at this period, I may as well give place here at once to one or two others, which followed, with the most exemplary regularity, upon that which I have quoted above.

“ MY VERY DEAR TREASURE,

“ Well, the great dinner has come off, and we have made a mess of it. But I had better begin at the beginning at once, and tell you how I adorned this wonderful person of mine,

which will interest you full as much as the rest. My dear, I put on a new light-blue upper skirt, most portentously looped up with blue and white bows, over a white glacé petticoat, intensely trimmed round the bottom with blue and white tulle, the sleeves and body matching, and fitting to a T. Hair immensely got up with lace, flowers, and streamers, like twenty carriage horses ; pearl necklace and brooch, left me by grandmamma, and every bracelet which I possess. The grooming took an hour and a quarter, not a minute less, but I think it was rather successful ; for when I met Dauntless upon the staircase, he said—‘Cammy, you are an out and outer to-day ; for all the world you look like a Sévres teapot ;’ and the governor himself grinned like a hyæna when he saw me.

“ In due course of time, who should make his entrée but the hero himself, and I daresay that you would like to know something about his appearance. To give the D—— his due, there is not much to find fault with in that

respect. He is tall—about as tall as Calcraft, say—yet not so distinguished looking neither; but he holds himself well, and seems altogether the right sort of thing. His hair very bright and black and plenty of it, with even something to spare about the whiskers and beard. The moment he entered, up the Governor brings him to me and introduces—bow and smile, courtesy and blush; and there we are, pretending to look another way, but taking each other in to any amount. ‘A fine day this,’ said he. ‘Heavenly,’ replied I, looking upwards, and then what does he do but turn right round upon his heels, sit down by Lady Doveglance, and whisper anything you please into her ringlets until dinner was announced. You should have seen the Governor’s look at me as if it had been my fault.

“When the move began, up comes the creature and takes care to say that he had been desired to hand me in. ‘Indeed?’ replied I, in tremulous surprise, and so we moved on. As the Fates would have it, however,

who should, quite unconsciously, find her way to the other side of him but Lady Doveglance, and then again you should have seen his lordship's eye, as if it had been my fault. For ten minutes, at least, not a word was uttered by the hero, saving to the Doveglance's ringlets, so much that I could not have attempted to create a diversion had it not been for the aforesaid eye and the fear that his lordship would actually explode. So I watched for the first little interval of suspense and asked if he liked London. 'Hate it,' replied he. 'So do I. You are fond of the country, then?' 'Can't endure it.' 'Indeed! You are rather partial to Paris, I presume?' 'Paris! I look upon Paris as quite the most detestable hole in the world.' 'Then where is it that you would like to live?' inquired I, with the deepest interest. 'To say the truth, I am tired of existence; but I find it just bearable at Tappaculco. Perhaps you don't know where that is?' 'I have not the slightest conception.' 'It lies five hundred miles south of Rio Janiero; I hope to run

over and spend next winter there, as I did the last. It is a wonderful place—such a climate—such shooting, monkeys, parrots, and tookans—such fishing, whales, sharks, and sword-fish.' ‘It must be a real paradise! How I do envy your crossing the Atlantic! that is just what I would rather do than anything else in the world. Is there any society at—at—where you are going?’ ‘At Tappaculco? no sign nor vestige of it, that’s why I like it. No one to call on; no one to invite you to dinner, in the hopes that you will take some troublesome daughter off his hands.’

“There’s for you, my darling Vinny, the very words. Did you ever hear of such a horror, looking a wretched girl in the face, and serving her thus. And what do you think poor Cammy said? At first, my dear, nothing at all. So desperately taken back was I, that I did not, I vow, distinctly recollect for a minute or two where I was, or what had happened. It’s lucky, after all, that I am not a man, for the way that my blood

boils when anything savouring of a slight is cast upon me, is something formidable. I felt myself getting as red as twenty turkey cocks, and then trying to grin, and not able, and then wanting to recur to my champagne and water, but not making out which it was. In the meantime, the monster had taken again to be most confidential to the Doveglance's ringlets ; so that, to let it blow over a little, I entered into a long converse with my other neighbour, young Osbaldistone, about the merits of the last Derby. I had my turn, though, in the end. Just as second course was over, the wretch, as if taking compassion upon me, again said : 'So you would like to see something of the world, would you ?' 'I should.' 'Then you ought to get up a yacht.' 'Ah !' replied I, 'the worst of a yacht is, that it makes people so thoroughly unfit for anything else.' 'Does it ?' 'Except the safest kind of insolence, insulting inoffensive girls !'

"My darling, I was quite ready for him this time, as cool as Walter's 'dwy ;' and I

came out with the foregoing as deliberately and as innocently as could well be. I staggered him not a little; but he put a better face upon it than I had done, for he soon said—‘Are yachting men given that way?’ ‘Some are.’ ‘Do you know many instances of it?’ ‘I know one.’ ‘Did it happen to yourself?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Where?’ ‘Here.’ ‘In your father’s own house?’ ‘Exactly; just as I was doing the honours, according to my poor abilities, to a mere stranger, whom I had never seen before, and never cared to see again.’ ‘But are you sure any reflection was intended upon you?’ ‘I didn’t take the trouble to imagine. I tried to give as good as I got, which is not a bad plan in this world; and then I simply made a vow never to exchange another word with such an ill bred coward.’ ‘And did you keep it?’ ‘You shall see.’ And I turned a shoulder and a half upon him inflexibly for the rest of the dinner. My dear, who will describe his lordship’s eye? Twice in the evening later, the yachting character

endeavoured to mend matters a little ; but I don't think he will begin a third time.

" Now, all this was very well, my own dear treasure, so long as any of the company remained ; for I could talk on, right and left, to all appearance as unconscious of his lordship's eye as if he had been a hundred miles off. But the hour of reckoning came, nevertheless. No sooner had the door closed upon the last of the company, than up he stalks to me and cries — ' Cammy, you want to bring things to a head—I see you do.' ' I, sir ! with whom ?' replied I, as innocent as the unborn. ' You will find out with whom before long. What have you been about all to-night ?' ' Doing my best to meet your wishes, sir—without the slightest success, I must admit.' ' And whose fault was that, pray ? Didn't I see you, eh ? turning your back upon him during more than half the dinner ?' ' Perhaps, you did.' ' And do you call that meeting my wishes ?' ' Yes, for at first I had done my best, and looked my best,

and said my best to no purpose at all ; and so there was nothing else for it. And if it was anybody's fault, it wasn't mine.' 'Whose was it, then, I should like to know?' 'Ah ! I am too dutiful to say.' 'Do you mean to insinuate that it was mine?' 'That's your construction, not my own.' 'Is the girl mad? What had I to do with it, more than giving you the opportunity?' 'That's just it, sir. May I simply ask who it was that told you the hero was thinking at all of what's called settling down?' 'Who? Lady Doveglance, I believe.' 'Ah ! ah ! ah ! just so.' 'What is there to laugh at in that?' 'Only that she has done her best to make a great fool of—me, I mean, of course.' 'Do you understand a word of all this, my dear?' said he, appealing to Lady D. 'Not a single syllable.' 'Shall I rise to explain, sir?' 'I wish you would.' 'Well, in the first place, the Doveglance hates me,' 'Why?' 'Never mind why—because I have seen through her two or three times perhaps. But

she don't dislike a pleasant dinner, with an agreeable neighbour, so that, altogether, she has done pretty well for herself this evening. She can't have found much fault with the dinner, for Mr. Blanquette *s'est surpassé*. She certainly did not object to one of her neighbours, and, finally, she thinks she has served poor Cammy Dareall out, but she hasn't. Are you beginning to take it in?' The only answer was a suppressed inarticulation, very much like the lion's at the Zoo., when he is poked up against his inclination.

"Having made good my ground so far, my own treasure, I thought it was time to assume the offensive. 'Your son-in-law that won't be,' continued I, 'has about as much thoughts of settling down, as I—or rather, who shall I say? as the Grand Turk has. And having found that out, I reined in, of course.' 'They had better mind what they are about,' interposed his lordship here; 'they won't find me a safe person to make a fool of.' 'Right there,' cried I; 'but

they will do that with a vengeance, if you go and break out about it. They have knocked a capital and very pleasant dinner out of you, which they enjoyed very much indeed, and there is nothing for it now but to be wiser another time, and not be too fond of trusting family matters to unsafe people. But, I say, are we going to Lady Heliotrope's ball or not?' 'Certainly not, that I know of.' 'All right; I am always happy at home, you know.'

"Now, my darling, it so happened that I was beyond all expression up to the mark, actually dying to go; but knowing that Lady D. was expiring still more on the same account, I thought that I would leave it for her to work out, which she did in a very few minutes, whilst I was humming a tune over the *Standard*. 'What sort of a ball will this be at Lady Heliotrope's,' muttered his lordship, after a short interval of very unquiet repose. 'Rather good, I believe,' replied Lady D. 'You don't care to go, do you, my dear?'

'Not in the least, for myself.' 'Well, but for her, eh ?' 'For her—it may be a good thing for her to be sure. There is no saying what might occur.' 'Well, then, I suppose we had better go. Do you hear, Cammy?' 'Yes, sir, and I will go with pleasure, as ma appears to wish it so much.' 'I don't at all wish to go on my own account,' retorted her ladyship, bridling up. 'I am not always thinking of myself, but try to please others sometimes.' 'A very good system, if not carried too far,' replied I. My dear, you should have seen *her* look that time, particularly when his lordship, staring very hard at us both, cried : 'What on earth is it you mean, about carrying it too far ?' 'Dear me, sir, only that people should have a little will of their own too. What else could I mean ?' But I had silenced her flirting ladyship for the present, and off we went to the Heliotrope's ball, which you must hear all about.

"Post hour again. It is too bad, upon my word it is. Government ought to interfere,

they really should, and not allow the mails to start until the letters are finished. However, as there is no help for it, we must put the ball off till to-morrow ; so with everything becoming from me to Lady E. and Calcraft,

“ Yours adoringly,

“ CAMMY DAREALL.”

The ensuing post did not fail to bring the following graphic and unadorned account of the ball.

“ MY DEAREST OF DARLINGS,

“ Here’s for the Heliotrope’s ball, according to promise. How I do wish that you had been there ! though there is compensation for all things in this world, so some people say —eh ? However, what’s certain is, that there was no one there worthy so much as to fasten the strings of your duck of a little shoe. Amy Fanwell looked best, upon the whole, in pink and white, with fuschias ; but wouldn’t she ‘ have sunk into dim shadow ’ (Calcraft) if the Divissima had appeared ?

“ Who do you think was the first person I

saw—almost the very first? My dear—Walter, looking, I must say, very handsome, and more intolerably conceited and absurd than ever. I did my best to take no sort of notice of him; but it was perfectly useless; he appeared so outrageously glad to see me. Of course, I was looking ‘fwesher than daybweak,’ and all that sort of thing. I wouldn’t hear of a waltz, a galop, or any kind of dance with him; but, as to shaking him off, that was quite out of the question; the more so, that he was always talking of you.

“‘How is that twarehouse, Vinny?’ ‘Remarkably well, I trust; never was better or happier in her life.’ ‘Ah! ah! ah! that’s the way she writes, is it? Vewy good.’ ‘It is the way she writes, and the way she feels.’ ‘Ah! ah! ah! How diffewent is her case fwom mine! Gwadually weduced to an unweal shadow with the suffewings of sepawation.’ ‘You certainly do look as if you were pining a good deal.’ ‘Don’t I now? Not gwacefully ineweasing in stature like you, Cammy, for,

I vow, I never saw a figure impwove in the way yours does. The Gweek slave at the Cwystal Palace was nothing to you.' 'I wish that you would go and talk this nonsense to somebody else. I don't mean to have you poring over me the whole evening, I can tell you, as if I were a book, and you were a student.' 'It is the exubewance of my joy at seeing you again, Cammy. I should have called on you sevewal times duwing the last week if it had not been so intolevably hot. And so Vinny wites in good spiwits?' 'It is a pleasure to read her letters—they are so cheerful.' 'Ah! ah! ah! she'll mawwy Cal-cwaft, I bet! Ah! ah! ah!' 'If she does, she will marry an excessively agreeable, charming, captivating man, who will make her a thousand times happier than she ever could have been had she unfortunately yielded to her first ill-advised impulse.' 'How vewy good! ah! ah! ah! There is nobody half so entertaining as you, Cammy; you are so vewy owginal.' 'Am not I now? Per-

haps you will be glad to know that this originality does not cost me much, for I am saying nothing but what I most sincerely think.' 'Well, but as that pweious, charming Calcwraft is not here to-night, you had better dance with me.' 'No, I won't!' 'Nor waltz?' 'No.' 'Nor polk?' 'No; I am engaged for the next eighteen of each.' 'Ah! ah! ah! then we will dance the nineteenth waltz together after to-mowwow morning. I would write to Vinny, if it wasn't quite so hot, and tell her what a wun there is after you; more than fifty engagements before you have so much as entewed the ball-woom.'

"Just then, my dear, who should happily come to the rescue but young Maresdale, entreating for a waltz. 'It is no use, my good fwieand,' cries that ridiculous Walter; 'she is engaged for the next nineteen.' You never saw anything look so blank as the poor boy, so much so that I couldn't but exclaim—'No, she is not, except for people she dislikes. She is quite ready for the next waltz with

you.' My dear, such a revulsion ! I suppose that I had spoken inconsiderately, but little did I suspect the consequences. I have mentioned young Maresdale to you before, have I not ? You can't have seen him, I suppose, as last year he must have been still at Eton, or something very like it, and he has only just joined Dauntless' regiment of Life Guards. It is a pity that he is a younger brother, and a little too young in other respects also, or perhaps—but it is really out of the question. Well, my dear, to proceed It struck me, from the first, when the waltz began, that there was something rather excited about him, but, still, nothing very marked ; until, for want of something better to say, I asked him if he did not think that Amy Fanwell was looking particularly well to-night. 'I have eyes only for one here.' 'Indeed ; already lost your heart?' 'I have, ever since the Duchess of Rideover's ball.' I really did not recollect, my dear, that we had waltzed together there, so I quite innocently enquired

if the individual was near us.' 'Yes, at my very side.' I looked around, and whispered — 'Emily Draggleton, I suppose?' 'Emily Draggleton! If you knew what my feelings are, you would not trample upon them thus.' There was no mistake here now, was there? so I thought it better to bring matters to a head, at once, and said: 'Let's take another turn' (the child waltzes uncommonly well), 'and then I'll tell you something.' His arm trembled so, that the turn was a short one; and, the moment we stopped, he said: 'Am I to expect a word of hope, or of despair?' 'Neither; only a simple question: does your mamma know you are out to-night?' 'She does.' 'And what you are about?' 'Yes; in a way. I know she thinks I had much better marry than lead a life of dissipation.' I here laughed so heartily, that one of the knots of my gown, which had been some time loose, fell to the ground. 'This, I'll keep, at all events!' cried he. 'I wonder if ribbons have a language, as well as flowers?'

‘ Of course they have. Shall I tell you what these mean ? ’ ‘ Oh ! pray do.’ ‘ This white one stands for, ‘ don’t you be ’—this blue one for, ‘ such a ’—this white one again for some strong epithet, which we will leave to imagination ; and this other blue one for, ‘ fool again.’ Do you branch ? ’

“ This last question, my own darling, might almost have been dispensed with, so blank did the poor boy look ; but what was to be done ? The child is such a real child, that there was no treating the matter seriously ; and, then, besides, as I told him, he has a bow of Cammy Dareall’s to comfort him, which is more than anybody else in London can boast of ; and so we parted pretty good friends, after all, considering the circumstances. Perhaps I oughtn’t to tell all this, even to you ; but the child is such a child ; and then I cannot have any secrets from my own darling Vinny. Besides, I was actually obliged, in self-defence, to say something of it to his lordship ; and, surely, I cannot be less confidential with you than with him.

À ce propos, no sooner was I again seated by Lady D. who should come up but his said lordship, exclaiming: ‘They are here; I am told they are here. Have you seen them?’ ‘Who, sir?’ said I. ‘The Dove-glance and that yachting fellow.’ ‘Oh! they have been gone for more than five minutes,’ replied I; ‘but here’s Walter Dieaway who is dying more than usual to see you.’ Upon a sign from me Walter, who was close at hand, and who, to be fair with him, is sharp enough when he sees my eye upon him, immediately stepped up and engrossed the peer’s whole attention for many minutes. During these, I watched my opportunity and succeeded in instilling into his lordship’s ear a few most impressive words of warning, about giving way to any hasty feelings. I was just in time for, to my apparent surprise, the very couple were seen bearing down in our direction; but he behaved like a brick and nothing unpleasant occurred.

“ Still, there was no shaking off that wretch

Walter ; but I must say that I gathered one rather interesting particular from his ridiculous conversation. It would appear that he is beginning to ascertain the true merits of the odious society with which he had connected himself. ‘ By the bye, Cammy,’ said he, as he was dogging my footsteps into the tea-room, ‘ I suppose that you have heard of my misfortune?’ ‘ No, and don’t wish to.’ ‘ That’s vewy cwuel of you considewing I shall lose the five hundred pounds.’ ‘ I wish it had been a thousand, if it were to be a warning to you.’ ‘ It will, indeed, be a gweat warning to me ; but you seem to know all about it.’ ‘ Not a word.’ ‘ I thought Dauntless might have mentioned it.’ ‘ Dauntless is in the habit of only mentioning what may interest me.’ But surely it is intewesting to know who forged the check for the five hundred. Would you believe it was no other than Selina Bwown herself?’ ‘ I am delighted to hear it.’ ‘ Well, I am glad, too, that we have made the discovewy. And though the affair is much to be wegwerted, and I would

almost say deplowed, in a pecuniawy point of view, still, if it can contwibute to weform me.' —' I have very little hope of that.' ' You are wong, Cammy, you are wong, indeed. It is gwadually beginning to bweak upon me that wespectable society is, after all, by far the best. Selina Bwown is a vewy pwetty girl, and has a most wemarkable figuwe ; but, still, how diffewent she is, in the long wun, fwom such tweasures as Vinny and you.' ' Now, no impertinence, if you please, sir—no impertinence !' ' My gwacious, how peppewy we are, to be sure ! I was only wefewwing to the diffewence between Vinny and you and the other party. I am not aware that any forgewy was ever committed either by Vinny or by you, while Selina Bwown—' ' I will not allow either Vinny or myself to be mentioned in this sort of way. Such comparisons are really too insulting !' ' It is not a compawison, old fellow, it's a contwast—a bwoad contwast—that I am instituting ; and when I think how gweat is the diffewence, I weally

wonder that I should ever have been betwayed
by my youth and inexpewience—'

" But I am ashamed, my treasure, of taking
up your time with this egregious nonsense, so
believe me, to-day, and for ever,

" Your truly loving,

" CAMMY DAREALL."

END OF VOL. II.

